







**EVOLUTION OF POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF  
M. N. ROY**





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**G. P. BHATTACHARJEE, M.A., Ph.D**



**THE MINERVA ASSOCIATES  
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**TO MY PARENTS**



## PREFACE

In preparing this book I have received assistance from many distinguished persons and to all of them I owe a considerable debt of gratitude. I am grateful to Dr V. P. Varma, Professor and Head of the Department of Political Science, and Director, Institute of Public Administration, Patna University, whose criticisms and suggestions have been of immense value to me in writing this book. I am indebted to Prof. R. L. Nigam who as secretary, Indian Renaissance Institute, Dehradun, gave me all facilities to use the M. N. Roy Archives. I am equally grateful to Prof. A. B. Shah whose generous cooperation enabled me to read the unpublished Jail Volumes of Roy. I am particularly indebted to Prof. Prasanta Kumar Ghosh, Head of the Department of Political Science, Maulana Azad College, Calcutta, and to Shri Sushil Mukherjea of the Minerva Associates. Prof. Ghosh has taken the trouble of going through the entire manuscript and has suggested innumerable changes in it. He has done his best to improve the manuscript within a short period, and without his help and cooperation the book would have remained more imperfect in language and style. My esteemed friend Shri Mukherjea has been a constant source of encouragement and valuable suggestions. My indebtedness to Prof. Ghosh and Shri Mukherjea cannot in fact be measured by any form of words.

Lastly, I must refer to my friends in the Radical Democratic Party and the Radical Humanist Movement. My conversations with them, their different attitude towards the ideas of M. N. Roy and their various attempts to put his idea into practice, both in their personal lives and in the political life of the country, have contributed to broadening my own understanding of the subject. The views expressed in the book on the political thought of M. N. Roy are my own. I am, however, fully aware of the difficulties of interpreting the ideas of such a profound thinker as Roy, and what I have written here must be taken as a provisional and incomplete account of a very complex subject.

International Relations Department,  
Jadavpur University,  
Calcutta-32.

G. P. Bhattacharjee



## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE TEXT

ALL ARE BOOKS BY M. N. ROY

IT	:	India in Transition.
WWW	:	What do we want?
IPS	:	India's Problem and its solution.
OYN	:	One Year of Non-cooperation from Ahmedabad to Gaya.
AN	:	The Aftermath of Non-cooperation.
FIP	:	The Future of Indian Politics.
OTI	:	Our Task in India.
OP	:	Our Problems.
OD	:	Our Differences.
F	:	Fascism—its Philosophy, Profession and Practice.
HTC	:	Heresies of Twentieth Century.
M	:	Materialism.
SS	:	Science and Superstition.
GNS	:	Gandhism, Nationalism and Socialism.
IIW	:	Ideal of Indian Womenhood.
F or F	:	Freedom or Fascism?
SP	:	Scientific Politics.
WR	:	War and Revolution.
IW	:	India and War.
CI	:	Communist International.
INAAR	:	I.N.A. and August Revolution.
NO	:	New Orientation.
BC	:	Beyond Communism.
NH	:	New Humanism* (Second Revised Edition).
RR	:	Russian Revolution (1949).
IM	:	India's Message.
RH	:	Radical Humanism.
RRR	:	Reason, Romanticism and Revolution, 2 Volumes.
PPP	:	Politics Power and Parties.





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## INTRODUCTION

M. N. Roy was one of the most colourful, though highly controversial, personalities in the political life of India of the present century. No historian of Indian nationalism and freedom movement would possibly accord him any significant place in it. Barring the first few years of his political career in the underground revolutionary movement M. N. Roy always swam against the main current of Indian nationalism, and in spite of a chequered and eventful career he remained more or less obscure, invested with an element of myth and romance. The biography of M. N. Roy is a subject-matter of painstaking research work about which almost nothing has as yet been done in our country.<sup>1</sup> The present work is not a biographical study but an attempt to explain and evaluate the gradual evolution of the political ideas of Roy which found its culmination in the development of a new philosophy to which he gave the name 'New Humanism' or 'Radical Humanism'. About his philosophy of New Humanism Roy said: "Born of the adventure of life, it marks a stage in the adventure of ideas".<sup>2</sup> Gifted with an extra-ordinary intellectual power Roy had the rare ability of drawing lessons from his experience and of revising his own theory in the light of this experience. His constant search for the truth and his endeavour to adjust his convictions thereto was, as Prof. North has put it, a tragic weakness for Roy the revolutionist but for Roy, the philosopher, it was his greater strength.<sup>3</sup> While discussing his political thought we must, therefore, refer, though in a very brief and broad outline, to his varied activities and many-sided experience which constituted the main matrix around which his ideas were developed and continually evolved.

The political ideas of M. N. Roy passed through three distinct, though unequal, stages of evolution. They are Nationalism, Marxism and Radical Humanism. He began his political

1. Samaren Roy's book *The Restless Brahmin* dealing with the early life of M. N. Roy has recently been published.

2. Ellen Roy and Sibnarayan Ray, *In Man's Own Image*, Foreword by M. N. Roy, p. 14.

3. Robert C. North, *The Revolution in Asia: M. N. Roy in Revisionism*, Ed: Leopold Labedz, p. 100.

life in 1902 or 1903 as an active worker in the underground revolutionary movement of Bengal. He left India in 1915 in search of arms to liberate the country. The period from 1902 (1903) to 1915 constitutes the first stage of his political career when he was an ardent nationalist. During this period he naturally could make no original contribution to the field of political thought. In 1920 he was a confirmed Marxist and took a leading part in the second World Congress of the Comintern in Moscow. The period from 1915 to 1920 was for Roy a period of transition during which nationalism gradually gave way to Marxism. Roy remained a Marxist for a quarter of a century and in 1946 his disillusionment about communism and Marxism became evident. The Marxist period of Roy's career (1920 to 1946) should, for our convenience, be divided into two periods—his imprisonment in India for six years (1931 to 1936) forming the interlude. The first ten years of his Marxist career (1920 to 1930) were spent in Europe trying to influence Indian politics from abroad. After his release from the prison in 1936 Roy's approach to Indian politics assumed a new dimension though the old moorings were not completely lost. Roy's ideas in the second period of his Marxist career (1936 to 1946) were in many respects different from the ideas he held earlier and therefore they should be carefully contrasted. With the end of the second World War, and largely as a consequence of it, Roy lost his faith in communism, and after a natural but brief period of hesitation, he gave up Marxism altogether, and laid the foundation of New Humanism or Radical Humanism which constitutes his own contribution to the field of political thought. The philosophy of Radical Humanism is very largely a logical unfoldment and elaboration of the ideas held by Roy previously in the name of Marxism. In the First Part of this work Roy's ideas and experiences previous to the period of Radical Humanism have been explained. The Second Part seeks to explain the various aspects of the philosophy of Radical Humanism and along with the explanation his ideas naturally have been put to the test of criticism with reference to their logical coherence, their applicability to the present situation and their ability to explain the various facts and developments of history.

M. N. Roy wrote a large number of books, pamphlets and articles—a good portion of his writings still remains unpublished—dealing with various problems, contemporary as well as fundamental, political, economic as well as philosophical. A basic

political problem—the problem of man's freedom in society—appears to run like a red thread through all his writings of different periods and on different subjects. Though his political ideas evolved through various stages still throughout his life Roy had one basic quest—the quest for human freedom. In the course of a lecture in 1946 when he was changing his views on Marxism, Roy, in a mood of self-analysis, observed : “When as a school boy of fourteen I began my political life which may end in nothing, I wanted to be free . . . . In those days we had not read Marx. We did not know about the existence of the proletariat. Still, many spent their lives in jail and went to the gallows. There was no proletariat to propel them. They were not conscious of the class struggle. They did not have the dream of communism. But they had the human urge to revolt against the intolerable conditions of life. They did not know exactly how these conditions could be changed. But they tried to change them, anyhow. I began my political life with that spirit, and I still draw my inspiration rather from that spirit than from the three volumes of Capital or three hundred volumes by the Marxists.”<sup>4</sup>

Like Marx and Gandhi, Roy developed his political ideas while leading the political movement. Original political thinkers in the pure academic sense are yet to be found in modern India. Modern Indian political thinkers have also been leaders of the political movement, and they developed their ideas not with a view to making a major scholarly contribution to any philosophical system or to political thought in general. In the writings of Roy and all other modern Indian political thinkers one will not find a close and detailed analysis of any particular problem of fundamental importance such as the Austinian theory of sovereignty or the Aristotelian analysis of the forms of Government. Their approach is more general and their ideas were inspired more by the struggle for independence and the vision of future India than by any academic interest. Active interest in the contemporary political problems and controversies is not inconsistent with, perhaps it is congenial for, the development of profound political thought. Without such interest it is doubtful whether a Plato or a Machiavelli, a Hobbes or a Rousseau would have produced his monumental work. The ability to pierce through the contemporary issues and controversies to the

underlying and perennial problem differentiates a political philosopher from a politician. Rousseau's 'Social Contract' is not simply an indictment of Bourbon tyranny. With the achievement of Italian unity, 'The Prince' of Machiavelli did not lose its significance. In many cases, however, the political leaders, caught in the whirlpool of political activities, find no time to develop and systematise their ideas coherently and thus fail to make any fruitful contribution to the domain of political philosophy.

Starting with the contemporary problems, did Roy rise to the level of philosophic reflection of perennial value? During the Marxist phase of his career Roy was possibly more a politician than a political philosopher. He, it is true, very often went beyond the contemporary issues to the fundamental problems and his thoughts were also not always bound by Marxist phrases and categories but his anxiety to give all his ideas the label of Marxism did create a barrier in the way of the free development of his ideas. Moreover, in order to maintain his party and face the formidable opposition of the entire nationalist movement (particularly during the time of the second World War), Roy had to write much that had no more than propaganda value. After Roy came out of the spell of Marxism and gave up even party politics, he devoted most of his time and energy towards developing a new philosophical system. Some might have regretted his withdrawal from the field of practical politics but this comparative withdrawal gave Roy—as it gave to Sri Aurobindo earlier—the opportunity to express his genius as an original political thinker, and this assured him an abiding place in the history of modern Indian political thought. Active interest or participation in practical politics becomes useful for a political thinker only if, instead of being lost in it, he uses his experience as the foundation for the construction of a theoretical structure. Contemplation without participation may make a political philosophy unreal, and participation without adequate contemplation will make it superficial. Barring six years of prison life (1931—1936), the larger part of his political career was spent in the hectic atmosphere of political activities though during this period his pen never remained idle. The last eight years of his life (from 1946 to his death on 25 January 1954) were devoted almost exclusively to reflection on the basis of a wealth of experience, both wide and deep, gathered for about half a century from different countries of

the world. Deep meditation on a rich experience produced a philosophical harvest which, with all its possible short-comings, is undoubtedly worth-considering.

Most of the political thinkers of modern India were, as we have already mentioned, participants in the political movement of the country and naturally their ideas were largely influenced by the experience of the national struggle. In the evolution of Roy's political ideas not only the Indian struggle for freedom but also the currents and cross-currents of the world politics have had a direct influence. The ideas of no other political thinker of modern India are so directly influenced by the events of international politics. In Mexico, in the politics of the Communist International and on behalf of the Communist International in the communist movement of China, Roy played a very significant and dynamic role. He came in close personal contact with all the important leaders of the communist world. Even after he came back to India in 1930, his living interest in international politics continued undiminished and he wrote extensively on the subject. As a matter of fact, it was the foreign policy of Soviet Russia in the immediate post-war period which created in his mind doubts about the liberating significance of communism and Marxism. Thereupon, he began to re-examine the fundamental principles of Marxism in the light of the achievements and failures of Soviet Russia and Russian foreign policy. As a result, Roy gave up the philosophy of Marxism and laid the foundations of a new philosophy. The origin and full significance of the philosophy of New Humanism cannot be understood unless it is explained in the background of this international politics. In this work, therefore, we have tried to explain this background fully.

There are a large number of thinkers in the world today who were once attracted by communism but later repelled by its practice. In India M. N. Roy is the foremost amongst them. Disappointed and terrified by the spectre of Communism, Roy, instead of accepting the philosophy of liberalism and the practice of Representative Democracy, tried to evolve a new philosophy as an alternative to Marxism. A study of the evolution of his thought and an analysis of the new philosophy propounded by him would help us not only to judge communism in a new perspective but also to re-examine the basic postulates of what is usually called Western Democracy. At present when India is passing through a period of national reconstruction and



democratic experiment on a large scale a critical enquiry into the political ideas of M. N. Roy may have a practical and utilitarian value apart from its intrinsic and theoretical justification.

Dr Prakash Chandra has already prepared a dissertation on the political philosophy of M. N. Roy<sup>5</sup> but there is still ample scope for more work on the subject. The purpose of the present work is, as it has already been pointed out, twofold. First, to explain and evaluate the political ideas of Roy during the Marxist phase of his career with an analysis of the factors that ultimately led him to give up Marxism altogether. Secondly, to examine critically the major aspects of the philosophy of New Humanism. In his dissertation Dr Prakash Chandra has dwelt at length on the various aspects of the philosophy of New Humanism but he has not gone into any detailed examination of the political ideas of Roy during the Marxist period. He has referred only in the barest outline to the factors leading to his conversion from Marxism to Humanism, and the significant impact of the developments of European politics during the time of the Second World War and the immediate post-war period has not been brought into focus. Only in the third chapter entitled 'Life, Times and Works' he has referred to the ideas and activities of Roy during the period prior to the formulation of the philosophy of New Humanism. This study, confined to one chapter, is necessarily very brief and sketchy. He has not, it is evident, brought the political ideas of Roy during the Marxist period within the purview of his main research work except as an introductory study which naturally precludes any detailed analysis based on original source materials. The portion treated by Dr Prakash Chandra only cursorily has been discussed fully in the first part of the present work. A detailed analysis of the political ideas of Roy during the Marxist period, particularly during the second part of his Marxist career, appears to be of vital importance for a clear appreciation of his humanist philosophy, because, they contain, in an embryonic form, some of the basic ideas of New Humanism. The profound and significant change that came to

5. This dissertation is still unpublished and I have gone through the typed copy preserved in the Lucknow University Library. Dr Prakash Chandra however published a brief summary of his thesis in *The Radical Humanist*. [See *The Radical Humanist*, XXII (January 25, 1955), p. 40].

the ideas of Roy in the period following his return to India in 1930 has not been noted by Dr Prakash Chandra. This changed outlook, fully revealed in his voluminous writings in jail, gradually led him to give up Marxism and evolve the philosophy of Humanism. The logical relation between these two phases of Roy's thought has been sought to be explained in this work.

The second part of this work which deals with the explanation and critical examination of the major aspects of the philosophy of New Humanism is the subject-matter of the dissertation of Dr Prakash Chandra also. New Humanism was developed by Roy as a comprehensive philosophy to serve as an alternative to Marxism. It is a philosophy of action based on clear thought. Roy launched in 1948 a Radical Humanist Movement in order to realise his ideal gradually. The nature, position and the prospects of the movement supply us with some clues on the basis of which its theoretical assumptions may be tested. The present writer has been closely associated with this movement since its very foundation, and the experience of the movement, if objectively analysed and rationally judged, may serve as the best critique of its philosophy. But an objective analysis and rational judgment of one's own experience about a movement may sometimes be rendered difficult by the presence of the forceful personality of the founder of the movement himself. At present when the movement is twenty-two years old and has developed its own leadership and technique, it is possible to judge the movement and its theoretical postulates in a more objective manner than was possible for Dr Prakash Chandra who completed his writings within four years of the death of M. N. Roy. Besides these advantages of time, it may be mentioned here that the unpublished materials preserved in the M. N. Roy Archives at the Indian Renaissance Institute, Dehradun, have been utilised in preparing this work. Dr Prakash Chandra does not refer to such materials anywhere in his dissertation. The points mentioned above possibly justify the writing of another dissertation on the political philosophy of M. N. Roy.

Recently two books on the political philosophy of M. N. Roy<sup>6</sup> have been published, one by Dr B. S. Sharma and the other by Dr Niranjana Dhar. Dr Dhar's book is written in a

6. B. S. Sharma, *The Political Philosophy of M. N. Roy*; Niranjana Dhar, *The Political Thought of M. N. Roy, 1936-1954*.

spirit of adulation but the approach of Dr Sharma is critical. Dr Dhar's book consists of a number of popular essays most of which were published in the journal *The Radical Humanist*. It does not trace the entire process of the evolution of the political philosophy of Roy but deals with his ideas as they developed after his release from jail in 1936. Dr Dhar's book does not contain a full account even of all the major aspects of the philosophy of New Humanism. The theory of history, propounded by Roy in his humanist period, for example, is not discussed at all by the author. Dr Sharma's book is however a critical, though very brief, account of the different phases of the political ideas of Roy. But it makes no attempt to study the underlying causes that led to the various changes in his political outlook. The political philosophy of Roy, particularly his interpretation of Marxism in the period following 1936 and his Radical Humanist philosophy, cannot be properly explained and understood unless they are discussed with reference to his practical experience and reaction to world events. Moreover, neither Dr Dhar nor Dr Sharma have consulted the unpublished writings of Roy preserved in the M. N. Roy Archives. Though Dr Sharma refers to almost all the major aspects of the political philosophy of New Humanism, he is so brief, both in his explanation and criticism of the political ideas of Roy, that the need of a more detailed and elaborate account of his ideas still remains.

There are however excellent volumes containing references to Roy's activities in the communist movement both in India and in China but there is no book dealing exhaustively with the entire process of the evolution of his political thought leading to the formulation of the philosophy of New Humanism. A. K. Hindi's book on Roy's biography under the title *The Man Who Looks Ahead* is incomplete and it does not cover the whole of the Marxist stage of his career. There are six more books<sup>7</sup> dealing with Roy's political and philosophical ideas,

7. Sibnarayan Ray, *Radicalism*; Ellen Roy and Sibnarayan Ray, *In Man's Own Image*; Ramyansu Sekhar Das, *M. N. Roy—The Humanist Philosopher*; S. R. Sunthakar, *Towards Freedom: From Anti-Imperialism to Scientific Humanism*; G. P. Bhattacharyya, *M. N. Roy and Radical Humanism*; and lastly *M. N. Roy—Philosopher-Revolutionary*, ed. Sibnarayan Ray.

Recently Swadesh Ranjan Das, a devoted follower of M. N. Roy, has published a book in Bengali dealing with the activities and ideas of Roy.

which should be treated more as an introduction to and explanation of his philosophy than a critical analysis and assessment of his thought. None of these books has been written with the purpose of tracing in detail the historical evolution of his political philosophy.

In preparing this dissertation all the available writings of Roy have been thoroughly examined. The M. N. Roy Archives of the Indian Renaissance Institute, Dehradun, have, to the immense benefit of the research scholars, collected the writings of Roy. Besides Roy's books and pamphlets there are in the Archives,

- (i) nine unpublished MSS Volumes under the general title: *Philosophical Consequences of Modern Science*, written by Roy during six years in jail,
- (ii) large collection of his unpublished speeches and correspondence, and
- (iii) his numerous contributions to various journals including *Masses* and *Vanguard* (edited by Roy from Europe), *International Press Correspondence*, *Independent India*, subsequently renamed *The Radical Humanist* (founded by Roy in April 1937 and edited till his death), and *The Marxian Way*, later renamed *The Humanist Way* (a quarterly journal edited by him from 1945 to 1950).

Besides these documents, there are in the Archives secret police records as well as books containing references to his activities. A large part of his periodical writings is yet to be traced but the materials to which we have now access are adequate for constructing a clear account of the evolution of his political ideas.

It may be mentioned here that the nine MSS Volumes\* under the general title '*Philosophical Consequences of Modern Science*' are not wholly unpublished. Some of the books of Roy such as *Science and Philosophy*, *Materialism*, *Fascism*, *Ideal of Indian Womanhood*, *Historical Role of Islam* are taken largely from the pages of these volumes. A careful study of these Volumes appears to be particularly significant for two reasons. First, they contain a number of stray remarks and notes which have close resemblance with some of the basic ideas

8. I have gone through the typed copy of these volumes which are referred to in this dissertation as Jail Volumes.

of New Humanism developed later by Roy. Most of these passages remain as yet unpublished and in this work they have been referred to. Secondly, a comparative study of the Jail Volumes and the earlier writings of Roy clearly indicates the profound change that came to his ideas during this period. Previously, in his writings he was concerned mainly with the analysis of social and economic factors but during his imprisonment he was absorbed in the study of philosophical views of the great thinkers of the past though he always tried to relate their views to 'class interests'. In prison his main intellectual concern was to equip himself with the philosophy of Materialism and for that purpose he studied the development of modern science with remarkable thoroughness and accuracy. This shifting of emphasis from socio-economic factors to philosophy is significant and it marks the beginning of the end of Marxism.

# **PART ONE**

**NARENDRANATH AND NATIONAL POLITICS**

**M. N. ROY AND MARXISM : THE FIRST  
PHASE (1920—1930)**

**M. N. ROY AND MARXISM : THE SECOND  
PHASE (1936—1946)**

**ROY AND INTERNATIONAL POLITICS**



## NARENDRANATH AND NATIONAL POLITICS

The British conquest of India was an event of great revolutionary significance. It gave rise to modern India both by what it did and by what it provoked. By its tyranny and exploitation it naturally tended to unite the Indian people in a struggle against the common foreign enemy. The positive results of the British conquest of India were, however, of greater significance. On the eve of the British conquest, India was politically a mere geographical expression. The foreign conquerors brought about the political unification of India, set up a centralised administrative structure, and introduced a uniform system of law throughout the country. Economically, India was reduced to a position of an appendage to Britain, supplying raw materials to her industries and a secure market for her finished products. In order to sell British products in different parts of the country and to export the raw materials to Britain the whole country was united by a net-work of roads and railways. The roads, railways, post and telegraph services provided the bonds for the unification of the country. The old self-sufficient village units gave way to a unified national economy. In the process the flourishing indigenous industries were shattered with cynical injustice. All these profound changes were introduced in the interests of British Imperialism; they nevertheless brought about in India what may correctly be called a revolution both in the political as well as in the economic sphere. And the judgement of history is determined more by the effects than by motives of changes. The political, administrative and economic changes introduced into India by the British rule created objective conditions favourable for the rise of nationalism in the country.

Along with these changes the British impact brought about a revolution in the realm of ideas and thoughts as well. The introduction of the English language in India—an event of far-reaching significance—enabled the Indians to come in close contact with the modern European thought and culture. At the same time the great orientalists such as Sir William Jones and Colebrooke, British archaeologists and philologists like James Prinsep, Alexander Cunningham and Fergusson and Western scholars like Max Muller discovered the rich and variegated culture of India's past. As a result, India became conscious of



her own rich heritage.' The cultural reaction of India to these new developments was two-fold. On the one hand there was the attempt to reconcile the liberating aspect of the Western culture with the cultural heritage of ancient India in a great synthesis. Raja Rammohan Roy (1772-1833) in Bengal and Justice M. G. Ranade (1842-1901) in Maharashtra were the greatest exponents of this view. As against this, there arose an opinion in favour of revivalism which regarded the past spiritual culture of India as superior to the 'materialist' culture of the West and while accepting the scientific achievements of Europe, it tried to revive the religious culture of ancient India as the basis of a new civilization. The greatest exponent of this view was Swami Dayananda Saraswati (1824-1883), the founder of the Arya Samaj, who was a staunch advocate of the revival of the Vedic culture in India. Both the schools stood for various social reforms but their attitude differed mainly on the evaluation of the Western culture. The first view laid the foundation of liberal politics in India and the second gave rise to militant nationalism. Until the rise of Mahatma Gandhi the history of the Indian Freedom Movement in its internal aspect was the history of the struggle between these two forces, representing two different views of life. The liberals followed a policy of gradualism struggling for various reforms but maintaining at the same time a close link with Britain. Loyalty to the western culture and the resultant endeavour to maintain close links with Britain made liberal politics of India halting and hesitant. The burning faith in the superiority of the Indian culture, on the other hand, made the anti-British struggle of the militant nationalists ruthless and uncompromising, their sole object being the attainment of complete national independence.

Bengal, the home of Rammohan and the cradle of liberal politics, was gradually turned into the storm-centre of nationalist extremism. The literature of Bengal—its poems and songs, its novels and dramas—stirred the Bengali youths with a spirit of intense nationalism. Parallel to the liberal politics there flowed in Bengal another stream of political-cum-cultural movement which in course of time became formidable. This movement, initiated by Raj Narain Bose, the maternal grandfather of Aurobindo Ghosh, and nurtured by his follower, Naba Gopal Mitra, the founder of the Hindu Mela, was raised to the level of religion by Bankim Chandra, the author of the *Ananda Math* and the *Vande Mataram* hymn. Swami Viveka-

nanda gave it a philosophy and Sri Aurobindo developed it into a mighty force in the field of political practice. The defeat of Italy by Abyssinia in 1896 and more particularly of Russia by Japan in 1905 strengthened the faith of the extreme nationalists in their ability to face the challenge of the West directly. When the atmosphere was thus charged with emotion, Lord Curzon's ill-conceived idea of the partition of Bengal in 1905 supplied the spark which set the whole province in conflagration.

The underground revolutionary movement was an aspect of the extremist politics of militant nationalism. It had the same philosophical background. Bengal was its centre of activity and Vivekananda the main source of inspiration. Its organisational structure and technique of struggle were different, it believed in the cult of the bomb and the revolver and worked through secret political groups. Bankim Chandra's *Ananda Math* was their model and they considered themselves as Sannyasins dedicated to the cause of the liberation of the Motherland. They collected money by dacoities and tried to create an atmosphere of terror by assassinating high officials. This movement was led by men of remarkable ability—Sri Aurobindo, his brother Barin Ghosh, Rash Behari Bose, Jatin Mukherjee, better known as Bagha Jatin, to name only the topmost few. The partition of Bengal by Lord Curzon and the First World War provided for this movement a congenial climate in which it could play a significant role. It naturally had an immense attraction for the romantic Bengali youths in the first few years of the present century. Two persons belonging to the inner circle of this movement made, in course of time, outstanding contributions to the realm of political thought. One is Sri Aurobindo and the other Narendra Nath Bhattacharyya, later known as M. N. Roy.

Son of Pandit Dinabandhu Bhattacharyya, Narendranath was born in the village Arbalia, 24-Parganas, West Bengal.<sup>1</sup> Narendranath's father left the family hearth of Midnapore district and came to Arbalia where he was appointed the Head

1. The year in which he was born is not exactly known. According to Mr. Abinash Bhattacharjee, a cousin and co-worker of Roy, he was born in the Bengali year 1293 (A.D. 1886-87). See *Radical Humanist*, XVIII (February 7, 1954), p. 78. According to the police record he was born in the year 1888. See History Sheet No. (687) of Narendra Nath Bhattacharji (No. 1), prepared by L. N. Bird, Special Assistant, Intelligence Branch, C.I.D.

Pandit of the local school. Later on he moved to Kodalia and started a money-lending business there. It would be beyond the scope of this work to render a detailed account of his early political career. Only a few facts culled mainly from police papers<sup>2</sup> are cited below.

Narendranath received his early education at the Harinavi School and later on joined the Calcutta National College. During this period he came under the influence of one Prabhāsh Chandra De, a prominent figure in the underground revolutionary movement, and was imbued with nationalist ideas. Narendranath became deeply involved in the movement and within a period of less than four years he was thrice arrested by the police<sup>3</sup> though in all cases he was acquitted by the court as the evidence against him was not adequate. During the First World War the underground revolutionaries of India, particularly of Bengal, tried to liberate the country with the help of German arms. A history of this Indo-German conspiracy even in bare outline cannot be attempted here. A large section of the revolutionaries was however united under the leadership of Jatin Mukherjee to take advantage of the war. Narendranath played a significant role in this exciting drama.<sup>4</sup>

The revolutionaries were badly in need of money and they decided to raise it through dacoities. Accordingly, the Garden Reach and Beliaghata dacoities were committed which brought the revolutionaries Rs. 40,000. Narendranath took a prominent part in the Garden Reach dacoity, committed on 12 February 1915, and was soon arrested along with Atul Ghosh and Sushil Sen (of Sylhet).<sup>5</sup> All of them were however released on bail of Rs. 1,000 each. Meanwhile early in March 1915 one Jitendra Nath Lahiri came to India from Europe, explained to the Bengal revolutionaries the details of the scheme of German help and asked them to send a representative to Batavia to establish con-

2. History Sheet No. (687) of Narendranath Bhattacharji (No. 1), prepared by L. N. Bird, Special Assistant, Intelligence Branch, C.I.D.

3. First, in connection with the dacoity in Chingripota Railway Station in December 1917; second, in connection with the dacoity at Netra in May 1909; and third, in connection with the Howrah Conspiracy Case in April 1911.

4. The account of his role given here briefly is, unless otherwise mentioned, based upon the *Sedition Committee Report*, 1918, Chapter VII.

5. Arun Chandra Guha, "First Spark of Revolution," *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, January 15, 1951.

tact with the Germans. The Bengal revolutionaries decided to send Narendranath, who was released on bail, to Batavia and he, adopting the pseudonym of C. Martin, started in April 1915. In Batavia Narendranath was introduced by the German Consul to Theodore Helfferich and from him he came to know that from the United States a ship, called the "Mevarick", had already started with arms and ammunition and was on its way towards Karachi. Narendranath urged them to redirect the ship to Bengal because in Karachi there was none to take delivery of the arms from the ship. Ultimately this was agreed. Narendranath had telegraphed 'Harry & Sons' in Calcutta, a fictitious firm kept by a well-known revolutionary, that "business was helpful". Later on, Harry & Sons wired to Martin for money and there began a series of remittances of money from Helfferich to Harry & Sons between June and August amounting to Rs. 43,000 of which the revolutionaries got Rs. 33,000 before the Government came to know of it. Narendranath returned to India from Batavia in the middle of June and along with the other revolutionaries made an elaborate plan to receive the Mevarick's cargo and use it in the best possible manner. In the proposed revolution Narendranath and Bepin Ganguly, a leading revolutionary of those days, were given the task of taking possession of all the arms and arsenals around Calcutta. The conspirators were waiting impatiently for the Mevarick but it did not appear. Meanwhile, the Government came to know of the conspiracy and on 7 August the police searched the premises of Harry & Sons and made some arrests. In the same month Narendranath along with Phanindra Chakravarti<sup>6</sup> started for Batavia for the second time to discuss the matter with Helfferich.

In August 1915 Narendranath left India for Batavia in quest of arms. Fifteen years later, in December 1930, he came back to India as 'Dr. Mahmud' with new ideas in his head to make a revolution. In the course of these fifteen years Narendranath was transformed into M. N. Roy—the ardent nationalist came back as a convinced communist. Our task now is to find out the answer to the question—why did Narendranath give up nationalism and embrace communism?

The answer to this question must be traced to his experience of the five fateful years—from August 1915, when he left

6. Jadu Gopal Mukhopadhyay, *Biplabi Jibaner Smriti* (in Bengali), p. 34.

India, to July 1920, when the second congress of the Comintern began its session with M. N. Roy playing a leading role in it. For information regarding these crucial years in the career of M. N. Roy we have to depend mainly upon his Memoirs and the Notes which he prepared in order to relate the story of his adventures to old friends when he first met them in Calcutta in 1938 after his release from prison.<sup>7</sup> Our purpose here is not to trace the history of his adventures as such but to try to discover the working of his mind which ultimately led to his acceptance of Marxism.

The exciting journey of Narendranath through the Far Eastern countries in quest of German arms was not only a failure but also a great disappointment. It undermined his faith in the sincerity of the Germans and in the seriousness of the Indian revolutionaries. All his attempts to despatch arms to India failed owing to the reluctance of the Germans to take this business seriously.

On the suggestion of Von Helfferich and his influential brother, Narendranath made a plan, as he says in his Memoirs, of sending the German ships, which were already in the Dutch harbours with sufficient arms on board, to storm the Andaman Islands, release the political prisoners there and land with them on the coast of Orissa. But this plan failed because, as he records later in his Memoirs, the Germans refused to play such a serious game. The German Consul General, writes Roy, disappeared mysteriously on the day when he was expected to issue orders for the execution of the plan. As a result, Narendranath became convinced that the Germans did not mean anything serious about Indian independence.<sup>8</sup> Later on, he proposed to the Germans, as he mentions in his Notes, that if they gave India money she might herself purchase arms from China or Japan or the U.S.A. A message with this proposal was sent to the German Embassy in the U.S.A. and in reply Narendranath was asked to go to China and meet Admiral Hintze, the German Ambassador to China. Narendranath, thereupon, left Java and went to the Philippines, Japan and Korea enroute to China.

7. A typed copy of this Note under the title, *When I left India .....Notes of the story told to old friends at their first reunion in Calcutta in 1938*, is preserved in the M. N. Roy Archives, Indian Renaissance Institute, Dehradun. Hereinafter it will be cited as *Notes* only.

8. *Notes*, p. 2.

In Manila he met the German Consul who disappointed him completely and Roy writes that henceforth he began to suspect "the real motive of the Germans".<sup>9</sup> From Manila Narendranath went to Japan to meet Rash Behari Bose evidently expecting much aid from him but disappointment faced him again. Rash-behari, instead of encouraging his plan, asked him to wait and told him that the liberation of India was conditional upon the success of the bigger mission of Japan, namely, to free Asia from white domination.<sup>10</sup> This naturally could not satisfy the romantic idealism of Narendranath impatient to do something immediately. Thereupon he met the Chinese nationalist leader Sun Yat Sen who was in Japan by that time. But he also like Rash Behari told him about the mission of Japan to liberate Asia and advised patience and perspicacity. Sun Yat Sen was a great disappointment for Narendranath and he writes : "At home in India, we had heard so much of the great Chinese leader, and given to hero-worship, hailed him as an 'avatar'. Face to face with him, I found it rather difficult to go down on my knees humbly".<sup>11</sup> Narendranath, however, made another scheme with Sun Yat Sen. By that time the Chinese provinces of Yunan and Szechuan, just on the border of Burma and India, rose in revolt against Yuan Shih-Kai's attempt to restore monarchy. Narendranath suggested that if some arms could be passed on to the Indian revolutionaries across the frontier from Yunan and Szechuan that would be a great help to them. Sun Yat Sen told him that with five million dollars he could win over Yuan Shih-Kai's supporters and bring about his downfall and the entire stock of arms and ammunition could be handed over to India at any place on the frontier. This was an exhilarating proposal for Narendranath and he decided to go to China and meet the German Ambassador for the required amount of money. He left Japan and through Korea came to Tientsin and met the German Consul there. The indifferent attitude of the German Consul was a great disappointment as well as an eye-opener

9. *Ibid*, p. 3.

10. *Roy Memoirs*, (February 8, 1953), p. 66. Roy's Memoirs were serially published in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, Calcutta, and also in his own journal *Radical Humanist*, from February 1, 1953 to September 5, 1954. All references to his Memoirs in this work are from the *Radical Humanist*. Recently, however, the Memoirs have been published in the form of a book.

11. *Roy Memoirs*, (February 8, 1953), p. 66.

for Narendranath. Referring to this experience he writes later: "I found in him the same attitude that I had already noticed in his colleagues in Java. They treated Indians as mercenaries. Some Indians came to them and got a revolver and some leaflets and some money and went off with that. That was their job".<sup>12</sup> Narendranath told the German Consul that his was a more serious business and thereupon he was asked to meet the German Ambassador to China at Peking. Narendranath went to Peking and had long talks with Admiral Hintze for two or three days and on his advice he made a concrete agreement at Hankow with an accredited emissary of Yunan in the presence of the German Consul.<sup>13</sup> When the plan was thus ready the German Ambassador, Roy writes, regretted his inability to spend such a large sum of money. He discovered that the faith of the Bengal revolutionaries upon Germany was misplaced. Recalling this event he writes in his Memoirs: "The conversation with Von Hintze dispelled my still lingering illusion about Germany's sympathy for the victims of British Imperialism".<sup>14</sup> The German Ambassador, however, suggested that Narendranath might go to Berlin and submit his plan there for the consideration of the German Government<sup>15</sup> and promised to send a report of their talks, with his approval, to the Berlin authorities.<sup>16</sup>

Though profoundly disappointed, Narendranath, having nothing more to do in China and Japan, decided to try his luck first with the German ambassador to the U.S.A. and finally the Supreme General Staff in Berlin. With the assistance of the German ambassador he left China for America with a view ultimately to go to Berlin. On his way he landed at Japan and saw Rash Behari Bose again. There he met Heramba Lal Gupta, the representative of the Indian Revolutionary Committee of Berlin in America, who advised Narendranath to remain in the Far East leaving the plan of purchasing the arms in China in his hand.<sup>17</sup> The first encounter with this revolutionary of the Berlin Committee was not at all pleasant for Narendranath. Gupta told Narendranath that without his recommendation the German ambassador to the U.S.A. would not meet any Indian; at the

12. *Notes*, p. 6

13. *Roy Memoirs* (February 8, 1953), p. 68.

14. *Ibid.*, (February 22, 1953), p. 90

15. *Ibid.*, (February 8, 1953), p. 68.

16. *Notes*, p. 8.

17. *Roy Memoirs* (March 1, 1953), p. 102.

same time he refused to give him the necessary recommendation. It was at last decided that Gupta would also go to America and help him to see the German ambassador and go over to Berlin.

Narendranath landed at San Francisco in the summer of 1916 and went to the town of Palo Alto, the seat of the Stanford University. There he met Dhanagopal Mukherjee, the younger brother of Jadu Gopal, the revolutionary comrade of Narendranath in Bengal. Dhanagopal advised him to forget the past and to start as a new man and it was he who gave him the name Manabendra Nath Roy.<sup>18</sup>

Roy was at the western coast for about two months and it was during this time that he came in contact with Evelyn, a young Stanford graduate, who accompanied him to New York, married him and was intimately connected with his political life until their separation in 1926. Unfortunately we know very little of this episode of Roy's life about which he writes nothing in his Memoirs.<sup>19</sup>

In New York, Roy tried to contact Indian revolutionaries who might help him to go to Berlin. He met Gupta who however could not help him in any way since he was replaced by Dr Chakrabarty as the representative of the Berlin Committee in America. Roy thereupon met Dr Chakrabarty but received, as he says in his Memoirs, no assistance from him whatsoever.<sup>20</sup> He appears to have been very much repelled by Dr Chakrabarty and makes some caustic remarks about him. He writes that Dr Chakrabarty "had nothing to do with any revolution. Nor was he a villain. He was rather a crank and could be flat-

18. *Ibid.*, (February 1, 1953), p. 54.

19. Referring to this marriage of Roy, Chandra Chakrabarty writes: "Roy was arrested (in New York) for kidnapping a girl from Stanford, on the telegraphic complaint of her father, a Scot. But the girl Ellen became indignant and said that she was old enough to do what she pleased. Nobody seduced her. She came of her own accord with Roy and she was willing and ready to marry him, and they were married in the prison and released; and I presented them with a jar of honey for their connubial bliss". Chandra Chakrabarty, *New India—its growth and problems*, p. 34. The girl whom Roy married at New York was Evelyn and not Ellen. Ellen was the second wife of Roy whom he married later.

20. Chakrabarty however writes a different story. He says that he was negotiating with the captain of a submarine to take Roy to Germany in his ship but next day Roy was arrested for kidnapping Evelyn and soon after the release they crossed over the border to Mexico. Chandra Chakrabarty, *op. cit.*, p. 34.



tered to do objectionable things..<sup>21</sup> The Indian revolutionaries associated with the Berlin Committee with whom Roy had come in contact such as Gupta and Dr Chakrabarty disillusioned him thoroughly and he concluded, as he records in his Memoirs, that "a revolution supposed to be led by such men could not be taken seriously".<sup>22</sup> For the time being he gave up all hopes of getting any help from anybody in his effort to go to Germany and thus the mission with which he left India practically came to an end.

With the fading of the old vision a new horizon opened up before the mind of Roy. In America he came in touch with new people and new ideas—socialists and anarcho-syndicalists. In New York he became closely acquainted with the veteran Indian nationalist leader, Lajpat Rai, who went to America on a propaganda tour and succeeded in winning the sympathy of a section of the American people towards the cause of Indian independence. But after the U.S.A. joined the war, he found both the American press and platform closed to him. Under such circumstances a new platform—though a very limited one—was given to Lajpat by the American socialists who sympathised with the aspirations of the colonial peoples. Roy along with Lajpat came in close contact with the socialists though both of them were opposed to their ideas. In his Memoirs Roy writes that Lajpat purchased the works of Marx and other socialist classics. Roy studied these books and became attracted towards the socialist ideas and began to frequent the New York Public Library to read Marx. Thus, as Roy recalls in his Memoirs, he soon accepted socialism, except its materialist philosophy which was his last ditch.<sup>23</sup>

The conversion of Roy to socialism can possibly be easily explained psychologically. He was convinced of the futility of the old quest for German arms. He had little contact with India—most of his comrades in India were either arrested or went underground. Moreover, he had lost all faith both in the Germans as well as in the Indian revolutionaries abroad. Under such conditions of disgust, disappointment and frustration the positive response of his mind, full of youthful ardour and enthusiasm, to the new ideas of socialism is not at all surprising.<sup>24</sup>

After the defeat of Germany a number of Indian revolu-

21. *Roy Memoirs* (March 1, 1953), p. 103.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 103.

23. *Ibid.*, (February 1, 1953), p. 56.

24. The following extract of a letter from an Indian conspirator

tionaries abroad turned to Soviet Russia for help against British imperialism, and the Soviet Union, for national and ideological considerations, was willing to give them assistance through the Communist International. This prospect of Soviet help to the Indian struggle for independence made their minds favourably disposed towards communism. This psychological factor alone can explain why a large number of Indian nationalists who were associated with the Berlin Revolutionary Committee and the Indo-German Conspiracy adopted communism or came very near to it. Roy also passed, as he says in his *Memoirs*, through "this psychological process."<sup>25</sup> Secondly, the moral fervour of socialism—the desire to abolish poverty and promote the welfare of the poor and the down-trodden—was not alien to the ideal of a revolutionary nationalist. Trying to explain his own conversion to socialism Roy writes: "We all shared the same vague desire to uplift the poor and the down-trodden. Bankim Chatterjee's '*Ananda Math*' was our common source of inspiration."<sup>26</sup> "Therefore", Roy continued in the same article, "the ideal of social justice could be easily incorporated in my inherited hierarchy of values or in whatever philosophy of life I might have had in those days". Thirdly, Socialism also stands for anti-colonialism and advocates freedom of the subject peoples, and, therefore, acceptance of socialism did not mean for Roy a betrayal of the mission he was entrusted with. It was rather the continuation of the same pursuit though with a broader perspective. Fourthly, the acceptance of socialism did not alter fun-

in America to another in the Far East shows that the sense of frustration was shared by many.

"From my last letter you have had an idea of the circumstances on this side. They are most hopeless. Practically no work has been done nor is there much chance of any in the near future. No one cares for the cause. To be leader or prominent figure is the only motive. The Germans have lost faith in our cause. They no longer trust any of us. You know all of them work under express orders from home. Their present policy is to keep us in hand for possible future use and those of us who are accredited to them as the leaders of our cause are always playing their game for a few hundred dollars now and then, but I am not discouraged because I believed our cause has not been properly put to them." Weekly Report of the Director of Criminal Intelligence, dated January 13, 1917, in Proceedings of the Government of India in the Home Department (Poll—B), Progs. February 1917, Nos. 397-400 [Delhi Records...3 (Secret)].

25. *Roy Memoirs* (March 29, 1953), p. 150.

26. *Ibid.*, (March 29, 1953), p. 150.

damentally and essentially the particular type of political practice to which Roy was accustomed—secret, conspiratorial and violent. “The idea of revolution,” he writes, “associated with the heroic deeds of individuals armed with pistols or bombs, was fading in my mind. But the new idea of revolution taking its place also attached decisive importance to bloodshed and war.”<sup>27</sup> Therefore, Roy found little difficulty in changing his political faith. The conversion was, in fact, psychologically pre-determined. As Roy puts it: “The road from revolutionary anti-imperialist nationalism to communism was short”,<sup>28</sup> though, as he frankly admits, it was not easy for him to accept the materialist philosophy of Marxism. As an extreme nationalist Roy naturally had a religious outlook with a faith in the spiritual mission of India. Therefore, he took quite a long time to accept the materialist philosophy. But meanwhile several factors conspired to bring Roy heart and soul into the vortex of socialist politics and opened up before him the vista of a new political life where he might play a significant role. Placed in such a situation Roy’s mind naturally accepted the materialist philosophy of Marxism which alone would qualify him to take full advantage of the new opportunity.

The factors which brought Roy in the thick of socialist politics were, first, an unexpected scope for him to play a significant role in the socialist politics of Mexico, and, secondly, an acquaintance with F. Gruzenberg, better known as Michael Borodin, as agent of the Communist International under the guise of a Russian commercial representative.

Roy along with many other Indian leaders were arrested in the U.S.A. in connection with the Indo-German Conspiracy. Roy was let out on parole and he escaped to Mexico.<sup>29</sup> In Mexico we find Roy torn between two loyalties. The lure of the old mission came in conflict with the pull of the new ideas. There he met the Germans who gave him a huge amount of money, about 50,000 peason, all in gold coins,<sup>30</sup> and the old plan of purchasing arms in China was revived. Roy actually started for China, though he gave up the project on the way, realising that his mind was not in this “wild-goose chase”.<sup>31</sup>

27. *Ibid.*, (March 8, 1953), p. 114.

28. *Ibid.*, (March 29, 1953), p. 150.

29. *Notes*, p. 11.

30. *Roy Memoirs*, (May 10, 1953), p. 222.

31. *Ibid.*, (May 17, 1953), p. 235. During this period in Mexico Roy was possibly more a nationalist than a socialist. Manuel Gomez

Along with this activity Roy plunged headlong into the socialist movement of Mexico.

The left-wing politics of Mexico were in an amorphous and unorganised state dominated by Anarchism and Syndicalism. There was also a Socialist Party with which Roy came in close contact. By that time a number of American Radicals such as Charlie Philips, Maurice Baker, Irwin Granwitch, Henry Glinkenkamp escaped from the U.S.A. to Mexico in order to evade compulsory military service and Roy became acquainted with them.<sup>32</sup> Their political views, though not identical, had much in common and all of them, including Roy, joined the Socialist Party of Mexico.<sup>33</sup> Roy was in possession of a huge fund given to him by the Germans and he used this money to finance the Socialist Party organ '*La Lucha*' which was transformed into a regular weekly of eight pages.<sup>34</sup> The possession of this fund must have given Roy an advantageous position in the socialist circle. The Socialist Party of Mexico published half a dozen pamphlets, mostly written by Roy himself, and he proposed to convene a conference for forming a mass party of the working class. He was appointed the editor of the party organ and director of party propaganda.

Roy developed an intimate relation with the President of Mexico, General Carranza, and this created an atmosphere favourable for the pursuit of his political activities. In the U.S.A. Roy wrote a pamphlet called "The High Way to Durable Peace" where he maintained that world peace was conditional not so much upon the overthrow of capitalism as upon the liberation of the colonies. He could not publish it in the U.S.A. and in Mexico he translated it into Spanish and published it adding to it a chapter on the Monroe Doctrine. The President of Mexico was much impressed by the book and he met the author and

who was a friend of Roy in Mexico described him as 'deadly serious, intensely nationalist'. Roy, he says, had no interest in socialism or economic issues whatsoever at that time. (See *Survey—a journal of Soviet and East European Studies*, October, 1954, p. 34). In Mexico Roy published a book in Spanish on India which was full of nationalist sentiments. In that book he says that the Indian people under the Hindu monarchs were almost universally educated and illiteracy was unknown in ancient India. M. N. Roy, *La India, Su Pasado, Su Presente Y Su Porvenir* (México: 1918), p. 122.

32. *Roy Memoirs*, (May 24, 1953), p. 247.

33. *Ibid.*, (May 31, 1953), p. 260.

34. *Ibid.*, (June 14, 1953), p. 282.

from the first meeting, Roy says, they became very friendly and thereafter they used to meet quite often.<sup>35</sup> The relation between Mexico and the U.S.A. was at that time far from friendly and General Carranza supported Roy's idea of the formation of a Latin American League as against possible U.S. encroachment. Roy thus was safe in his pursuit of socialist politics and the Mexican President, Roy was told, had resisted Anglo-American pressure for his extradition.<sup>36</sup>

When Roy thus became a prominent figure in the Mexican Socialist Party, Michael Borodin appeared in Mexico and came in contact with the socialist group there. Roy invited him to come and stay with him and also helped him with money. They became close friends and Roy was fully converted to the Marxist philosophy by Borodin. Referring to Borodin's influence upon himself Roy writes : "He initiated me in the intricacies of Hegelian dialectics as the key to Marxism. My lingering faith in the special genius of India faded as I learned from him the history of European culture".<sup>37</sup>

After coming in contact with Borodin, Roy became very eager to change the name of the Socialist Party of Mexico into the Communist Party. He moved slowly and cautiously. He introduced Borodin to President Carranza, and Borodin assured the President that the new regime of Russia fully sympathised with the struggle of the Latin American peoples against imperialism and was eager to help it, and for this purpose he proposed the foundation of a Latin American Bureau of the Communist International. President Carranza welcomed the idea and thus his sympathy for the foundation of the Communist Party of Mexico was indirectly secured. An extra-ordinary conference of the Socialist Party was held with Roy himself in the chair. The Party considered and endorsed the Manifesto issued by the First World Congress of the Comintern and Roy argued that a resolution to change the name of the party was a natural corollary to this endorsement. The resolution to change the name was carried and the Communist Party of Mexico thus born affiliated itself with the Communist International. The conference resolved to send a delegation to the Second World Congress of the Communist International at Moscow and Roy was selected to

35. *Notes*, pp. 11-13.

36. *Roy Memoirs*, (June 21, 1953), p. 295.

37. *Ibid.*, (August 9, 1953), p. 379.

head the delegation.<sup>38</sup> Roy thus stood upon the threshold of a new chapter in his political career.

It is not at all difficult to guess why Roy was so eager to change the name of the Socialist Party of Mexico into the Communist Party. He writes that "for all practical purposes the programme of the Socialist Party was no less revolutionary than Communists should advocate under the given circumstances of the country".<sup>39</sup> Then why was this change brought about in its name? A Communist Party in Mexico would obviously be a feather in the cap of Borodin and he in return would help Roy to go to Moscow as the delegate of the party. Carleton Beals states: "Borodin, I later discovered, had told Roy that if he would found a Communist Party in Mexico, then get himself named delegate to the Third International Congress in Moscow, he, Borodin, would assist him to promote Hindu Independence, a bigger opportunity for Roy than remaining marooned in Mexico, far from the theatre of activities".<sup>40</sup> "With a tacit agreement about our future movements", Roy himself writes in his *Memoirs*, "we turned to the plan of founding the first Communist Party outside Russia".<sup>41</sup>

Early in November 1919 Roy started for Moscow armed with a Mexican diplomatic passport.<sup>42</sup> At the end of the year he came to Berlin no longer in quest of arms. There he came in close contact with many outstanding socialist and communist leaders like Bernstein, Kautsky, Hilferding, Radek, Ernest Meyer, Wilhelm Pieck, August Thalheimer, Reinrich Brandler and others. At last he reached Moscow and entered into a new phase of his political career.

38. *Ibid.*, (August 23, 1953), pp. 402-404.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 403.

40. Beals, *Glass Houses*, p. 50. Quoted by Overstreet and Wind-miller, *Communism in India*, pp. 25-26.

41. *Roy Memoirs* (August 23, 1953), p. 403.

42. *Ibid.*, (September 6, 1953), pp. 426.

## M. N. ROY AND MARXISM—THE FIRST PHASE (1920-30)

In Moscow Roy's main concern was still the promotion of the liberation movement in India though he began to look at the problem from an entirely different angle. It was no longer simply a national struggle for independence but a revolutionary movement against an oppressive social system. He tried to apply the Marxist doctrines to the conditions of the colonial and underdeveloped countries (particularly India) and deduced therefrom certain ideas about the perspective, strategy, tactics and ideology of the revolution in these countries. In this connection it may be pointed out that according to North and Eudin "it is no exaggeration to state that Roy ranks with Lenin and Mao Tse-tung in the development of fundamental communist policy for the underdeveloped, as contrasted with the industrialised, areas of the globe".<sup>1</sup> At this stage Roy did not develop any theory of his own—his originality, if any, lay only in the application.

In order to ascertain the perspective and nature of the Indian revolution, Roy tried to analyse the position and role of different classes composing the Indian society. His Marxist mind could not conceive the idea of the whole country, irrespective of classes, unitedly fighting against the foreign rule inspired by the ideal of nationalism. Immersed in the Marxist concept of the economic man and the class division of society, Roy tried to find out an economic motive behind the struggle.

Owing to the intervention of the foreign imperialism the social and economic evolution of India became abnormal and therefore the Indian society, Roy believed, must not be judged simply by applying the experience of the Western countries. The feudal rulers of India were deprived of political power by the representatives of the foreign bourgeoisie. With the growth of capitalism the craft economy of the feudal system is bound to die but in India the craft industry was destroyed not in favour of a higher form of production within the country but in the interests of the industrial growth of England. The machine

1. Robert C. North and Xenia J. Eudin, *M. N. Roy's Mission to China*, p. 1.

industry did not grow in India though its destructive effects were fully felt. In the words of Roy "the secret of the abnormal economic condition of India during a century and a half lies in the fact that with the machine, the effects of machine production were not kept out of the country".<sup>2</sup> As a result, the growth of the Indian economy became stunted. Later on, when the bourgeois class arose in India, it could not play its normal role for various reasons discussed below. Due to the abnormal development of Indian economy Roy analysed the position and role of five important classes of Indian society, namely, the landed aristocracy, the bourgeoisie, the petty bourgeoisie, the peasants and the workers.

To consolidate its foundation in India, the foreign imperialism naturally sought a social basis in the country—the support of a section of the Indian population. With this end in view, in the earlier days of their domination, the British rulers created a new class of taxfarming landlords "with more or less feudal attributes".<sup>3</sup> This land-owning class, owing its rise to Imperialism, became an unconditional supporter of the colonial economy. Pre-capitalist social relations thus galvanised became the basis of capitalist exploitation.

Roy's ideas on the role of the bourgeoisie in the colonial countries are found for the first time in the supplementary thesis on the National and Colonial Question which he prepared for the Colonial Commission of the Second Congress of the Communist International. In the Commission two theses on the subject were submitted—one prepared by Lenin and another by Roy. In his *Memoirs* Roy states that he prepared his thesis on National and Colonial Question at the suggestion of Lenin who was much impressed by the conversation which he had with him on this subject<sup>4</sup>. At his own insistence, Roy tells us in the same article, his viewpoint was presented as a supplementary, rather than as an alternative, thesis to that of Lenin. In order to understand Roy's ideas about the position and role of the bourgeoisie in colonial countries like India it is necessary to analyse his thesis and to compare it with that of Lenin.

The main point where Roy and Lenin differed was about the particular social force in the colonial countries that should

2. *IT*, p. 99.

3. *OTI*, p. 16.

4. *Roy Memoirs* (January 24, 1954), p. 43.



be assisted by the Communists. In his preliminary draft Lenin recommended assistance to "the bourgeois-democratic liberation movement"<sup>5</sup>. Roy, on the other hand, recommended assistance to the "proletarian parties of the colonies" and through them to the revolutionary movement in general.<sup>6</sup> In his thesis Roy referred to "two distinct movements" in these countries. One was "the bourgeois-democratic nationalist movement, with a programme of political independence under the bourgeois order" and the other was "the mass struggle of the poor for their liberation from various forms of exploitation". In order to overthrow the foreign rule "which is the first step towards a revolution in the colonies", Roy thought, "cooperation" between them might be necessary, but he was opposed to the attempt of the bourgeois-democratic nationalist movement to "control" the other one. Here Roy did not exclude the bourgeoisie from the anti-imperialist movement but the problem was one of leadership. He argued that in the anti-imperialist movement the leadership should remain "in the hands of a Communist vanguard" so that after the national independence "the masses in the backward countries may reach communism not through capitalist development" but peacefully under the leadership of the class-conscious proletariat of the advanced capitalist countries, that is, the Communist International. In his thesis Roy categorically affirmed that in the first stage "the revolution in the colonies is not going to be a communist revolution". On the contrary, he said, it would include "many petty bourgeois reforms" particularly in the agrarian field. But from this, Roy contended, it did not necessarily follow that the leadership of the movement should be left to the bourgeois democrats. The foremost task in the colonial countries, Roy thought, was to form communist parties which would organise the workers and peasants—the revolutionary masses—in the anti-imperialist struggle.

As a result of Roy's criticism Lenin's thesis was modified

5. For the Preliminary Draft of Thesis prepared by Lenin on the National and Colonial Question, See V. I. Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol. II. (Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1947), pp. 654-658.

6. For the Supplementary Thesis of Roy see Eudin and North, *Soviet Russia and the East 1920-27—A Documentary Survey*, pp. 65-67. For texts of the Second Congress of the Communist International dealing with Roy-Lenin controversy see Helene Carrere d'Encausse and Stuart R. Schram, *Marxism and Asia*, pp. 149-167.

and in the Final Draft of this Thesis the Communist parties were advised to support "the revolutionary liberation movements" rather than 'bourgeois-democratic liberation movements' as recommended in the preliminary draft<sup>7</sup>. Whiting thinks that the change was only verbal and in support of his view he quotes from Lenin who in his report to the Comintern Congress on the deliberations of the National and Colonial Commission said that every national movement can be only a bourgeois-democratic movement.<sup>8</sup> On the same ground Overstreet and Windmiller also conclude that "to Lenin's mind the change was more apparent than real"<sup>9</sup>. The views of Roy and Lenin were however "markedly different in emphasis"<sup>9a</sup>. Explaining the difference Roy in a letter to Whiting wrote : "I did recommend formation of Communist Parties on the ground that, as a guarantee against the danger of the nationalist bourgeois compromising with Imperialism, the movement for national liberation must be socially based on the workers and peasant masses . . . . Lenin believed in the revolutionary role of the bourgeoisie in the colonial countries on the analogy of European history"<sup>9b</sup>. Both stood for the bourgeois-democratic revolution in colonial countries but Roy held that the bourgeois-democratic revolution such as the abolition of feudalism and the development of industries does not necessarily mean the rule of the bourgeoisie. These changes should take place under a government controlled by the working masses and the same government would gradually lead the country to socialism. Therefore, the working class parties should be assisted by the Communist International. Though Lenin agreed to change his thesis still it is doubtful whether he accepted the viewpoint of Roy and the change practically made confusion worse confounded. The change in the wording of the thesis did not settle the controversy and it has rightly been pointed out that "the root of the later catastrophe in China lies to this duplicity"<sup>9c</sup>.

Overstreet and Windmiller think that Roy's ideas as ex-

7. For the Final Draft see Jane Degras (ed.), *The Communist International, Documents*, Vol. I, pp. 138-144. Crucial change took place in Paragraph 11.

8. Allen S. Whiting, *Soviet Policies in China 1917-1924*, pp. 51-52.

9. Gane D. Overstreet and Marshall Windmiller, *Communism in India*, p. 29.

9a. Milton Koyner, *The Challenge of Co-existence*, p. 102.

9b. The letter dated 11 March, 1951, is preserved in the M. N. Roy Archives, Indian Renaissance Institute, Dehradun.

9c. Franz Borkenau, *World Communism*, p. 292.

pressed in his Supplementary Thesis were possibly determined mainly by sentimental and personal factors.<sup>10</sup> As an Asian, they maintain, Roy naturally felt that the Asians were better able than the Europeans to understand the Asian conditions. Secondly, they point out that his ambition to establish his leadership over the communist movement in India might also have played a part in this matter. Virendra Nath Chattopadhyaya, the leader of the Indian Revolutionary Committee in Berlin, also established contact with Lenin and agreed to cooperate with the Comintern to further the cause of revolution in India. The Berlin Committee had fairly good relations with the Indian National Congress and its leader Chattopadhyaya was the brother of Sarojini Naidu, a prominent figure of the Congress movement and a close associate of Gandhiji. If the Comintern should decide in favour of the bourgeoisie, naturally it would give direct support to the Congress leaders. In that case Chattopadhyaya would be a greater help to the Comintern than Roy because the latter's contacts were entirely with the Bengali and Punjabi revolutionary groups. Therefore, Roy opposed Lenin. This, in brief, is the argument of Overstreet and Windmiller.

A brief comment on their views is necessary for an impartial evaluation of Roy's ideas. Roy maintained his view of the bourgeois-democratic revolution in colonial countries under the proletarian leadership (or hegemony) consistently for a long time until he gave up Marxism itself. Is it not more reasonable, therefore, to treat it as a theoretical proposition without trying to discover a personal motive behind it? If personal leadership were the principal concern of Roy, he should have sided with Lenin instead of opposing him. Is it conceivable that to oust Chattopadhyaya Roy went to the length of opposing Lenin's thesis? Roy had to face this controversy in all the Congresses of the Comintern as long as he was within it. Roy's opposition to Lenin, unless it was fortified by strong theoretical arguments, was more likely to ruin his leadership and bring Chattopadhyaya closer to Lenin. Moreover, it was only after the second World Congress that the contact between Chattopadhyaya and the Communist International was established. On the basis of the report of the British Intelligence, Overstreet and Windmiller gather that Chattopadhyaya sent to the Communist International a programme of his organisation of Indian revolutionaries two months after the

10. Gane D. Overstreet and Marshall Windmiller, *op. cit.*, pp. 30-32.

Second World Congress. Then why should Roy be so much afraid of Chattopadhyaya's group in the Second World Congress and go to oppose Lenin to maintain his leadership? In order to justify their suspicion Overstreet and Windmiller observe that Roy might have an inkling in Berlin that the Chattopadhyaya group would approach the Communist International for its support to the Indian National Congress. When Roy visited Berlin on his way to Moscow Chattopadhyaya was in Stockholm and therefore Roy could not meet him there.<sup>11</sup> He met Bhupendra Nath Dutta, an important member of the Berlin Committee, and Bhupendra Nath Dutta admits that Roy himself first invited Chattopadhyaya to Moscow.<sup>12</sup> All these considerations appear to make the suspicion of Overstreet and Windmiller rather untenable. In China and Mexico Roy had found that national independence by itself did not mean people's welfare and this experience was possibly the basis of his antagonism towards the bourgeoisie<sup>13</sup>. As an Indian he was certainly deeply interested in the revolution of his country but this does not necessarily imply that his theory was determined by racial arrogance.

In his thesis Roy did not deny the anti-imperialist role of the colonial bourgeoisie but he stood for the leadership of the 'Communist Vanguard' in the struggle against imperialism with an eye to the future development of the revolution in those countries. But his opinion on the role of the bourgeoisie in the colonial countries passed through a process of change ultimately giving rise to what is known as the 'decolonization' theory. In *'India in Transition'*, published in 1922, Roy refers to a clash of interest between Indian capitalism and foreign imperialism, the former trying to bring about the industrial development of the country and the latter trying to hold India as a source of raw materials and as a market for finished products. This relation of antagonism continued down the First World War but "the war", Roy analysed, "opened up a new era for the Indian bourgeoisie"<sup>14</sup>,—an era of cooperation between them and the

11. *Roy Memoirs* (November 8, 1953), p. 536.

12. Bhupendra Nath Dutta, *Aprakasita Rajnitik Itihas* (in Bengali), p. 256.

13. In his *Memoirs* Roy wrote: "As a matter of fact in Mexico I realised what I should have done but could not do in China: that national independence was not the cure for all evils of any country." *Roy Memoirs* (April 26, 1953), p. 198.

14. *IT*, p. 28.

British Government. During the war, due to her military pre-occupation, Britain, Roy argued, was unable to keep the Indian market supplied with manufactured goods. Temporarily, therefore, the competition of the imperial capital was removed and Indian capital found a free scope of development. Even after the war was over, Roy pointed out, the British Government which so far had persistently followed the policy of keeping India industrially backward found it necessary to change its policy. As a matter of fact, during the war and after it Roy found certain developments, such as the appointment of the Indian Industrial Commission in 1916, the Fiscal Commission in 1922 and the Montague-Chelmsford Reform Scheme in 1919, as indicating a spirit of cooperation between the Indian National Congress—the political instrument of the intellectual bourgeoisie to gain their economic objective<sup>15</sup>—and the British Government. Trying to explain these developments Roy discovered two basic factors, of which one was political and the other economic. The political factor occurred to him first and this is explained in his book *India in Transition*. The economic factor, which was fully elucidated later provided the foundation of the decolonization theory.

In the political movement of India Roy found, as we have already mentioned, the presence of two factors—one was the bourgeois class fighting the British Government for its economic interest and the other was the mass of poverty-stricken people groaning under the policy of exploitation pursued by the foreign capital. Though socially contradictory, these two factors, having a common enemy in the British Government, might unite in the anti-imperialist struggle. To prevent this union, Roy said, must be the natural desire and purpose of the British Government. After the war the British Government did not revert to the old policy of obstructing the industrial development of India owing to the fear that such a policy might force the Indian bourgeoisie to make common front with the Indian masses in the anti-imperialist struggle.<sup>16</sup> Roy interpreted the various concessions, political and economic, granted to the Indian bourgeoisie by the British Government after the war as attempts to split the revolutionary movement. British Imperialism, Roy further thought, was eager to come to an understanding with the Indian bour-

15. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 34.

geoisie in order to counteract the influence of the Russian revolution in the country. "The plan of British Imperialism" he wrote, "is to encourage the Indian bourgeoisie and to terrify them with the cry of Bolshevik propaganda"<sup>17</sup>.

Until the First World War the British imperialism in India rested, in Roy's view, on two factors, namely, loyalty of the revolutionary landed aristocracy and the passivity of the masses. After the war the passivity of the masses disappeared and the country was in a state of agitation. As a result, it was evident to the British Imperialists that their domination in India could no longer be maintained on the old narrow social basis, that is, the loyalty of the reactionary landed aristocracy. Therefore "the necessity of widening and deepening the social basis of British rule in India by winning over the native bourgeoisie became imperative"<sup>18</sup>. The policy of concession was a strategy of British Imperialism to win over the Indian bourgeoisie to its side.

This strategy, Roy thought, cannot remove the contradiction between the interests of the Indian bourgeoisie and those of foreign imperialism. The ultimate objective of the Indian bourgeoisie is to overthrow foreign imperialism in order to enjoy the right of monopoly of exploitation of the Indian people. But this objective cannot be realised by the Indian bourgeoisie without the help of the Indian masses. Therefore, the bourgeoisie in their own interest want the cooperation of the masses by throwing the door of the Indian National Congress open to them and thus the British strategy of winning over the sympathy of the Indian bourgeoisie may not succeed. Roy observed: "The overthrow of the British rule will be achieved by the joint action of the bourgeoisie and the masses, but how this joint action can be consummated still remains a question"<sup>19</sup>.

The bourgeois class in colonial countries is, according to Roy, objectively revolutionary in so far as it is anti-imperialist but in a positive way it cannot play the progressive part which its counter-part played in Europe. Roy explained this point clearly in the Fourth Congress of the Communist International held in November 1922. He said: "The bourgeoisie become a revolutionary factor when it raises the standard of revolt

17. *International Press Conference* (Hereinafter it will be cited as *Inprecor*) (June 28, 1923), p. 451.

18. *FIP*, p. 24.

19. *IT*, p. 41.

against backward, antiquated forms of society—that is, when the struggle is fundamentally against the feudal order, the bourgeoisie leading the people. Then the bourgeoisie is the vanguard of the revolution. But this cannot be said about the new bourgeoisie in the Eastern countries, or most of them. Although the bourgeoisie is leading the struggle there, it is at the same time not leading it against feudalism. It is leading the struggle against capitalism. Therefore, it is a struggle of the weak and suppressed and undeveloped bourgeoisie against a stronger and more developed bourgeoisie. Instead of being a class war it is an internecine war so to say and as such contains the elements of compromise. So, the nationalist struggle in the colonies, the revolutionary movement for national development in the colonies, cannot be based purely and simply on a movement inspired by bourgeois ideology and led by the bourgeoisie”<sup>20</sup>.

In Europe the bourgeoisie abolished feudalism in favour of a higher form of economy and thus they brought about a social revolution. But in India, Roy pointed out, the relation of forces is different and here in numerous instances “the rich landholder and industrialist are combined in the same person”<sup>21</sup>. In many cases the landholders themselves, investing their accumulated wealth to commercial and later, when the Government allowed it, (for reasons to be explained afterwards) to industrial enterprises, developed as the bourgeoisie. And as long as the road to industrial development was closed to them, the native bourgeoisie who arose as a group of middle men carrying on trade on behalf of imperialism naturally sought to invest their capital in trade, usury and land holding.<sup>22</sup> The bourgeoisie in India, thus, unlike the bourgeoisie in Europe, developed in alliance with and not in opposition to feudalism. Therefore, the bourgeois-democratic revolution cannot take place in India under the leadership of the bourgeoisie. The bourgeois national movement in the colonial countries “should be given support” (leadership must not be left to the bourgeoisie) in so far as it is anti-imperialist but the anti-imperialist role of the colonial bourgeoisie, Roy pointed out, is extremely limited because of the danger of their coming to a compromise even in their own interest with the imperial bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie in the colonial countries, he observed, “are now really afraid that in case foreign

20. *Inprecor*, II (December 22, 1922), p. 989.

21. *IT*, p. 23.

22. *OTI*, p. 49.

rule is overthrown as a consequence of the development of this revolutionary upheaval, a period of anarchy, chaos and disturbance, of civil war will follow that will not be conducive to the promotion of their own interests. That is to say the industrial development of the bourgeoisie needs peace and order which was given to most of these countries by foreign imperialism. The threat to this peace and order, the possibility of disturbance and revolutionary upheaval, has made it more convenient for the native bourgeoisie to compromise with the imperial overlord"<sup>23</sup>. The problem was a ticklish one because though the Indian bourgeoisie and the Indian masses are two objective forces making for a revolution still these two factors are divided by class interest. Under such circumstances, the Indian bourgeoisie, Roy maintained, "stands between two fires"<sup>24</sup>. It cannot fully cooperate with foreign imperialism because of the basic contradiction between their interests nor can it fully cooperate with the Indian masses fearing a social revolution submerging capitalism in the process. Which side would the Indian bourgeoisie prefer? In *India in Transition* Roy did not give any categorical answer to this question beyond suggesting that "to rely on the national solidarity under purely bourgeois leadership for the purpose of destroying British rule in India may not be always safe"<sup>25</sup>. Later thoughts, however, would give Roy a definite answer. That was to be found in the economic factor.

In a new economic tendency of British Imperialism in the post-First-World-War period Roy discovered a factor strong enough to unite the Indian bourgeoisie with foreign imperialism. This economic tendency is the foundation of what came to be known as the decolonization theory. A clear elucidation of this theory is found in several books, such as, *The Future of Indian Politics*, *Our Task in India*, *Our Differences* and in a number of articles.

After the First World War, Roy maintained, British Imperialism was faced with a severe crisis and a new economic tendency resulted from its attempt to overcome the crisis. Explaining its origin Roy wrote: "Owing to the contradiction of the world market on the whole and the reduction of her share in it, Britain found herself in deep industrial crisis"<sup>26</sup>. There was

23. *Inprecor*, II (December 22, 1922), p. 988

24. *IT*, p. 240.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 41.

26. *OTI*, p. 63.



a 'contraction of the world market' because the war had ruined a number of countries economically reducing their purchasing power almost to a vanishing point. And there was a 'reduction of Britain's share in world market' because when Britain was busy with war efforts several countries such as the U.S.A. and Japan established themselves in the world market as exporters of manufactured goods. As a result, a large part of the world market was lost to British industries and the actual production of Britain fell much lower than her productive capacity<sup>27</sup>. Owing to this decline in production the accumulation of British capital also diminished and the needs of the home industry (refitting the old etc.) absorbed so much of it that there was little left for the purpose of export<sup>28</sup>. In order to survive as an imperialist power under such circumstances Britain was forced to adopt new methods of imperialist exploitation. She was in need mainly of two favourable conditions—a large market to sell the produce of her industries, and secondly, a reduction in the cost of production in order to face the new competition successfully. In order to secure these two conditions the imperialist policy in India was given a new orientation. In its own interest British Imperialism, Roy maintained, now favoured a policy of Indian industrialisation reversing the older policy of keeping India industrially backward. A policy of industrialisation in India, would, Roy pointed out, enable Britain to secure the foregoing conditions, necessary for her survival as an imperialist power. To overcome the crisis, the British industries must sell more and more commodities to India and therefore the purchasing power of the Indian people must be increased. "This can be done", Roy explained, "only by raising the standard of living of the Indian people. The standard of living of the Indian people again cannot be raised unless the choking grip of her economic life is considerably loosened"<sup>29</sup>. That is, the obstacle in the way of her industrialisation must be removed. Indian industrialisation would help British economy also by creating a market for her metal and engineering industries. Owing to the rise of new industrial countries with greater competing power, Britain, as already mentioned, found herself in a difficult position. But this difficulty also could be obviated, Roy argued, by following a policy of Indian industrialisation. Industries in India would be

27. OD. p. 52.

28. OTI, pp. 53-54.

29. FIP, p. 43.

more profitable for the British capitalists than industries in their own country. Cheap labour, cheap raw materials and considerable saving on the cost of transportation taken together would enable the British capitalists to produce commodities at a very low cost in India and thus face world competition successfully. All these considerations led the British Government, Roy held, to encourage industrialisation in India. Summarising the whole process Roy wrote: "It is no longer profitable for Britain to hold India as a purely agricultural reserve. It will be more profitable to industrialise her. Industrialised India will offer lucrative investment for British capital, cheap labour and easily accessible raw materials will produce enormous profit; and the buying capacity of India will increase, thus helping British trade"<sup>30</sup>.

British Imperialism, therefore, decided in its own interest to follow a policy of industrialisation in India. But there arose, as Roy pointed out, another difficulty. It was the inability of Britain to supply the capital necessary to promote the rapid industrialisation of India. The post-First-World-War economic crisis, as previously indicated, seriously affected the accumulation of capital in Britain and she was not in a position to export the necessary amount of capital to India. In order to solve this problem the British capitalists agreed to form an alliance with the Indian bourgeoisie in whose hands a considerable amount of wealth had already been accumulated<sup>31</sup>. Therefore, the foreign imperialists and the Indian bourgeoisie came to an economic alliance on the basis of the mobilisation of India's capital resources under the hegemony of imperialist finance. This view of Roy came to be known as the theory of decolonisation. The theory implies a direct economic cooperation between the British imperialists and the Indian bourgeoisie. And this economic cooperation would, Roy firmly believed, prepare the way for political cooperation. After this economic alliance, the Indian bourgeoisie, Roy held, would not take part in any anti-imperialist struggle "except of the harmless parliamentary brand"<sup>32</sup>. The appointment of the Industrial Commission (1916), the Fiscal Commission (1922), the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms (1919)—all these were explained by Roy in terms of this theory.

Thus, in Roy's analysis, the landed aristocracy and the big

30. AN, p. 12.

31. OTI, pp. 53-54.

32. OD, p. 103.

bourgeoisie entered into an alliance with foreign imperialism and ceased to be revolutionary forces. The remaining three classes—the petty bourgeoisie, the peasantry and the workers—were the oppressed classes and the Indian Revolution, Roy maintained, would be the joint-product of these three classes<sup>33</sup>.

Of these three classes the petty bourgeoisie were considered by Roy as incapable of independent political action<sup>34</sup>. The usual Marxist derision of the petty bourgeoisie was fully shared by him. The petty bourgeoisie who were economically bankrupt were recognised by Roy as “an important factor in the national revolution”<sup>35</sup>, but their vision, he held, was clouded by the reactionary social philosophy of Gandhism. Moreover, the petty bourgeoisie, depending upon the upper classes and government employments, cannot advocate a violent overthrow of the foreign rule, and therefore Roy concluded that “the lower middle class extremism cannot and will not go very far beyond the limits set by the Moderates”<sup>36</sup>. Roy, however, still had faith in the revolutionary potentialities of the petty bourgeois class and maintained that under favourable conditions they might lean towards the toiling masses. He wrote : “The petty bourgeois are still linked in thought with feudalism and landlordism and are separated from the masses, but if we organise the peasantry and the workers they will force the pace of the petty bourgeoisie who are now ready to compromise with imperialism for the sake of peace and money. If they find that by fighting for more they gain support from the masses in their fight they will grow bolder and less inclined to compromise”<sup>37</sup>.

The remaining two of the oppressed classes, namely the peasantry and the workers, were considered by Roy as the most revolutionary section of the Indian population. They “will go boldly into the struggle, because they have nothing to risk, but everything to gain” from the violent overthrow of Imperialist regime<sup>38</sup>. Sometimes, therefore, Roy characterised the workers and the peasants as the only elements essentially revolutionary. Of these two classes again the peasantry was considered by him as too backward to be an independent political factor. They,

33. *Inprecor*, IV (July 25, 1924), p. 519.

34. *IPS*, p. 17.

35. *OTI*, p. 79.

36. *IPS*, p. 17.

37. *Inprecor*, IV (July 25, 1924), p. 519.

38. *IPS*, n. 17.

he said, either follow the bourgeoisie, when they carry on a revolutionary struggle against feudalism, or become allies of the proletariat. Therefore by this process of elimination the proletariat class emerges as the only class capable of leading the national revolution<sup>39</sup>.

By an analysis of the position and role of different classes in Indian society Roy came to the conclusion that a section of the Indian population in their own economic interest would side with foreign imperialism. The anti-imperialist war, therefore, would take the form of a class war rather than a national war for independence. "The movement for national freedom" he wrote, "has developed into a gigantic class struggle. In this situation the task is to confront the counter-revolutionary alliance of foreign imperialism and native reaction (the nationalist bourgeoisie is a thoroughly reactionary force) with the united army of all the oppressed and exploited classes"<sup>40</sup>.

In this analysis of the role and position of different classes in the Indian society Roy completely ignored the force of nationalism. Marxism had convinced him that man is exclusively an economic being and that politics is simply the means to realise the economic interest of a class. By acknowledging the revolutionary role of the Indian bourgeoisie, Lenin was at least more realistic because his theory was compatible with a national struggle for independence. Roy's thesis went directly counter to nationalism and could make no headway in the period of a national struggle for independence.

On the basis of the preceding analysis about the role and position of different classes Roy developed certain ideas on the nature and perspective of the Indian Revolution. The distorted growth of the Indian economy would, Roy maintained, make the pattern of the evolution of the Indian society different from that of Europe. In India capitalism has developed but feudalism has not been abolished. The bourgeoisie in India, Roy analysed, seek to maintain the feudal-cum-capitalist social order and cannot play the role its Western counter-part played in society. In order to abolish feudalism, India requires what is usually called a bourgeois democratic revolution, though the bourgeois class itself, as we have already explained, cannot bring it about. The development of capitalism, again, brings India

39. OTI, pp. 78-79.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 66.

on the threshold of the era of the proletarian revolution. The Indian Revolution, therefore would be of an unusual type. Describing the peculiar social setting of Indian conditions Roy wrote : "Two revolutions overlap in contemporary India. The bourgeois revolution has not yet been completed while the proletarian revolution appears on the order of the day. The latter does not depend upon the completion of the former. On the contrary the historic task of carrying through the bourgeois revolution devolves upon the proletariat and taking place under the leadership of the proletariat to become the prelude not historically (as the bourgeois revolution under any condition is) but immediately to the socialist revolution."<sup>41</sup>

The ultimate objective of the Indian Revolution, according to Roy, is obviously socialism but socialism cannot be achieved immediately because of the absence of its preconditions—the development of the working class on a large scale.<sup>42</sup> The majority of the Indian people belong to the peasantry and their demand is not socialism but the ownership of the land which they cultivate. Therefore, at the first stage the peasant ownership of the land would have to be recognised and to that extent the Indian Revolution would take the character of a bourgeois democratic revolution, but it would not be led by the bourgeoisie, and, therefore, they would not be allowed to reap any benefit out of it. The industries would not be left under the control of the private capitalists but would be placed under the direction of the state and the supervision of the Worker's Council, and, thus, the abuses and miseries of capitalist industrialism would be avoided. The Indian Revolution led by the proletariat would establish a system which would enter into the socialist phase directly without placing the bourgeoisie in power at any stage. This is what Roy meant when he said that the Indian Revolution would be the immediate prelude to the socialist revolution. This idea was further elaborated by him at a later stage.

The character of the state to be established by the Revolution would be determined by the nature of the revolution itself. Roy held that the Indian Revolution not being led by the bourgeoisie would not establish Parliamentary Democracy. He also deprecated the idea of a proletarian dictatorship for India under the existing conditions, though he did not categorically rule-

41. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

42. *WWW*, p. 37.

it out from the future evolution of the Indian society.<sup>43</sup> In his writings of this period Roy referred to 'the revolutionary democratic State'<sup>44</sup> for India, though its features were not fully explained. As early as 1922 and in many of his programmes formulated during this period Roy stood for universal adult franchise, but in *Our Task in India* he wrote aggressively on Democratic Dictatorship repudiating the principle of universal suffrage. The revolutionary democratic state based upon the franchise of the overwhelming majority of the people (not adult franchise) would, Roy wrote, also be a dictatorship because it would mercilessly suppress its vanquished enemy disregarding the hypocritical parliamentary principle of the right of the minority. In this book we find a faint glimpse of the new democratic state which Roy in course of time developed as Radical Democracy. Criticising parliamentary democracy Roy pointed out that under it political rights do not carry real and effective political power. The average citizen is given the right simply of casting votes once in a while but the effective power is monopolised by the capitalist ruling class. Under the revolutionary democratic state, visualised vaguely by Roy, the people would be given real and effective political power. The basic unit of the state would not be individual citizens but people organised by productive vocations. Delegates from these organisations would meet in conferences at district, divisional, provincial and all-India levels and both legislative and executive power would be vested in these conferences. They would elect Standing Committees to carry on the administration in the period intervening between two conferences. Under this system the legislature and executive functions of the state would not remain in separate bodies but vested in these conferences and Standing Committees elected by them.<sup>45</sup> The principal objective of Roy was, as he explained it in clear and unambiguous terms, to bring the state machinery under direct control of the people instead of keeping it as an instrument of coercion standing over their head. The concept of effective democracy, stated then in broad outline, was later to be dissociated from the idea of dictatorship and evolved with certain major changes into Radical Democracy.

Roy's theories about the nature and perspective of the

43. Cawnpore Case Evidence, Exhibit No. 13, p. 27.

44. OTI, p. 96.

45. *Ibid.*, pp. 96-98.

Indian Revolution were determined by the ideas which he formed about those of the Russian Revolution.<sup>46</sup> Socially and economically he considered India to be on par with the pre-revolutionary Russia and he therefore tried to apply the pattern of the Russian Revolution, as he understood it, to India too. Foreign domination of the country as such did not appear to have caused any change in the character of the revolution in India.

The Indian struggle for national independence, in Roy's opinion, was, as we have already explained, a form of class war and this analysis determined the strategy and tactics he tried to follow in the struggle. In the Indian society there were, in his opinion, three revolutionary classes—the workers, peasants and the petty bourgeoisie—and of these three classes the workers constituted the most advanced section. To launch an uncompromising anti-imperialist struggle for complete national independence, Roy stood for two parties—one of the proletariat only and the other consisting of the three revolutionary classes. In order to discharge its historic mission the proletariat, Roy wrote, must have its own class organisation—the Communist Party wedded to Marxism.<sup>47</sup> Besides, there was the necessity of another party binding together all the three oppressed classes of the Indian society—a democratic party of the people wedded to the programme of revolutionary nationalism.<sup>48</sup> The latter, which must include the former, should, Roy said, have a “non-offensive” name so that the diverse revolutionary elements of the country are not frightened away by the name itself.<sup>49</sup> Roy suggested the name of Peoples' Party or Workers' and Peasants' Party for it.<sup>50</sup> The Revolutionary Peoples' Party was to be organised as a part of the Congress though it should remain under the control of the Communist Party which must remain secret and illegal.<sup>51</sup>

The Indian National Congress arose, according to Roy, as the political organisation of the Indian bourgeoisie, and it remained under the influence of this class until the Non-Cooperation Movement of 1920-22.<sup>52</sup> After the First World War when the

46. See Chapter IV.

47. OTI, p. 80.

48. FIP, p. 117.

49. Cawnpore Case Evidence, Exhibit No. 5. p. 5.

50. *Ibid.*, Exhibit No. 12X, p. 241.

51. *Ibid.*, Exhibit No. 20, p. 5.

52. M. N. Roy, “The Indian National Congress”, *Inprecor*, VII, (January 13, 1927), p. 99.

British Government started a policy of co-operation towards the Indian capitalists, for reasons already explained, the big bourgeoisie left the Congress and during the time of the Non-Cooperation Movement, the Congress, Roy wrote in the same article, was turned into "a gigantic mass organisation focussing the revolutionary will of the entire people to become free from imperialist domination". In spite of its multiclass character, the movement, Roy observed, remained, on the whole, a petty bourgeois movement, with a reformist political outlook and a decidedly reactionary social ideology, and the leadership was for all practical purposes under the influence of the bourgeoisie. The withdrawal of the Non-Cooperation Movement by Mahatma Gandhi after the manifestation of violence at Chauri Chaura was considered by Roy as an instance of "rank betrayal of the revolutionary forces"<sup>53</sup> by the Congress leadership. But he confidently believed that the objectively revolutionary movement of the Indian masses would inevitably outgrow the reactionary leadership. "The economic forces", he wrote, "that are awaking them out of their age-long stagnation and apathy will assert themselves and the leadership of the political movement must conform to their imperious dictates."<sup>54</sup> After the suspension of the Non-Cooperation Movement the Congress, he believed, was brought to a state of disintegration, and the masses, he felt, were leaving the Congress. The rise of the peasant movement and the trade union organisation among the workers led Roy to this conclusion.<sup>55</sup> He was confident that Gandhian politics had no future in India and observed: "Non-Cooperation of the doctrinarian pacifists, of the Tolstoyan passive-resisters, has proved futile, as was to be expected."<sup>56</sup> "The leadership of the future", Roy wrote, "is left for those ardent and courageous revolutionaries who will undertake the task of organizing the Mass Party—the political party of the Workers and Peasants, the only social elements objectively revolutionary and whose interests can never be protected by half-way measures of reform and compromise."<sup>57</sup> Roy took upon himself the task of supply-

53. IPS, p. 7.

54. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

55. M. N. Roy, "The Peasant Movement in India", *Inprecor*, II (June 20, 1922), p. 379, and "The Indian Trade Union Congress", *Inprecor*, II (January 3, 1922), p. 4.

56. IPS, p. 20.

57. *Ibid.*, p. 46.



ing that leadership. He tried to organise the secret communist party and at the same time sought to influence a section of the Congress which might form the larger mass party.<sup>58</sup>

Like Gandhiji, Roy also believed that a successful struggle against Imperialism could be launched only with the active participation of the masses of the Indian people. But according to him, the only way to inspire the masses and bring them actively in the field of politics was to place before them an economic programme embodying their immediate material interests.<sup>59</sup> The simple idea of national independence, he thought, could not inspire the masses to political activity. Secondly, a struggle, he believed, must be launched first to realise the programme of the immediate economic interest of the people and this struggle which would at first be directed against the native vested interests would ultimately be linked up with the anti-imperialist struggle for national independence.<sup>60</sup> Thirdly, the isolated struggles against the native exploiters and the foreign imperialism would ultimately culminate in an armed insurrection throughout the country. This armed insurrection would synchronise with the convocation of a Constituent Assembly elected by the Indian people challenging the authority of the British Imperialists to rule the country. The idea of the Constituent Assembly as the way to achieve national independence was first suggested by Roy during the time of the boycott movement directed against the Simon Commission in 1928.<sup>61</sup> To conduct this struggle local committees of deputies elected by workers and peasants, artisans and employees, poor intellectuals and small traders, even of soldiers<sup>62</sup> should be set up throughout the country. Under the leadership of these Committees the masses would take recourse to direct action, such as strikes, non-payment of rent etc. to enforce their political demands. These Committees

58. See *Communism in India* by Overstreet and Windmiller. May also see David Druhe, *Soviet Russia and Indian Communism*; M. R. Masani, *The Communist Party of India*; Sir Cecil Kaye, *Communism in India, 1924-27*, (Government of India Press).

59. M. N. Roy, "The Lessons of the Lahore Congress" (Manifesto issued by Roy and few others residing abroad soon after the Lahore Congress in 1929). See *Independent India* (March 8, 1939).

60. WWW, pp. 26-27.

61. *Masses of India*, Vol. III, No. 12, p. 7.

62. Roy still cherished the idea of organising secret revolutionary nuclei in the army and expected that through propaganda and agitation the military forces of the Government would be decomposed and the bulk of the Indian army would be won over for the revolution, OTI, p. 92.

would develop as basic units of the future revolutionary state and would take over practically the function of the local government. The whole process would ultimately result in an armed insurrection in which the forces of the imperialist state would be overwhelmed and destroyed.<sup>63</sup> In Roy's scheme the oppressed and exploited people of the entire nation should be organised in local Committees and the net work of these Committees throughout the country should elect a Constituent Assembly of their own, challenging the right of the British Government to rule the country. The insurrection and the election of the Constituent Assembly are two aspects of the self-same revolutionary process—one is destructive and the other constructive. This was Roy's scheme of organised insurrection.

Roy felt that the Gandhian technique of mass mobilisation was completely inadequate for an all out anti-imperialist struggle. He was opposed to the programme of the Gandhian economy. The removal of British Imperialism was necessary, Roy argued, for the economic and social development of the country but the Gandhian economic doctrine with its emphasis on the *charkha*, opposition to industrialisation and the programme of the voluntary restriction of human wants was itself an obstacle in the way of the economic progress of the country.<sup>64</sup> Gandhi's Constructive Programme of spinning and weaving, wearing of *khadi*, organisation of national schools, removal of untouchability etc. was condemned by him as "purely reformist and non-revolutionary."<sup>65</sup> Another major fallacy of Gandhism, in Roy's Marxist analysis, was the obstinate and futile desire to unite all the Indian people, landlords and peasants, capitalists and proletariat, in a common struggle for an undefined goal.<sup>66</sup> A votary of class struggle, Roy believed that such a scheme was absolutely incapable of mobilizing the Indian masses in the struggle against foreign imperialism. Roy's strategy was in fact an application of the principle of Non-Cooperation on a large scale. He was convinced of the revolutionary significance of the technique of Non-Cooperation but the leadership of the Congress, he felt, could not wield the weapon properly. The Gandhian ideas, according to him, made Non-Cooperation Movement ineffective. He wrote : "Non-Cooperation as a tactics in our

63. OTI, pp. 92-93.

64. IPS, p. 5.

65. OYS, p. 72.

66. *Ibid.*, p. 56.

political struggle has not failed; it has not been tried.....In the hands of the revolutionaries who will know how to wield it, the methods of mass strikes organised on a nation-wide scale, are sure to develop as powerful onslaughts against the citadel of State power."<sup>67</sup>

In order to apply the principle of Non-Cooperation for revolutionary purposes it must, Roy maintained, be dissociated from the Gandhian cult of non-violence. According to him revolution through non-violence was impossible. He observed: "It is ridiculous to say that we are 'non-violent revolutionaries'. Such a breed cannot grow even on the soil of India. The expropriator will never give in without resistance; nor will the British leave India out of respect for our ability to suffer."<sup>68</sup> "The Government maintained by violence and brute force", Roy asserted, "cannot be overthrown without violence and brute force."<sup>69</sup> The revolutionary movement, in Roy's scheme, would take a violent form after the revolutionary forces were fully prepared and organised throughout the country. He asked his followers to avoid all acts of violence or terrorism before the revolutionary forces were prepared for the final showdown. "Premature violence", he said, "is worse than non-violence and sporadic terrorism has as much to do with revolution as the cult of 'ahimsa'."<sup>70</sup> But the tactical necessity of refraining from premature violence did not impose on the movement the cult of pacifism. On tactical grounds, he said, the best way was to leave out of the propaganda the controversy between violence and non-violence. "That will be the best tactical move we can make," he advised his followers, "without giving the lie to our propaganda."<sup>71</sup>

During this period Roy wrote little on the philosophical aspect of Marxism or on the ideology of the Indian Revolution. An orthodox Marxist, he believed in economic determinism and thought that a change in the economic basis would inevitably be followed by a corresponding change in the ideological superstructure. Therefore, he was concerned more with the economic than with the ideological aspect of the movement.

In so far as the Indian Revolution was led by the working

67. OYN, p. 72.

68. Cawnpore Case Evidence, Exhibit No. 13, p. 30.

69. IPS, p. 17.

70. AN, p. 116.

71. Cawnpore Case Evidence, Exhibit No. 13, p. 30.

class it was necessarily guided, according to Roy, by the philosophy of Dialectical Materialism. He wrote: "Dialectical Materialism is the philosophy of the proletariat . . . . . The leader of the Indian proletariat, that is, the Communist Party, therefore, stands firmly on the ground of historical materialism. It will carry on a vigorous ideological fight against all beliefs, traditions, and prejudices which will have great hold upon the young Indian proletariat. The economic development during the transition period will undermine religious beliefs and social institutions (caste system etc.). But the Communist Party as the organ of the revolutionary proletariat consciousness will expedite the objective process so as to quicken the ideological growth of the class."<sup>72</sup>

Marxism was the ideology of the proletariat, but in so far as the Indian revolution represented the peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie, its ideology was what Roy termed Revolutionary Nationalism. He did not explain it anywhere though what he meant by it was evident. Revolutionary Nationalism was the ideology of those classes who in their own economic interest stood for the complete independence of the country absolutely free from the control of British Imperialism. In other words, it was the ideology of the Indian masses and only the big bourgeoisie and the feudal landlords were excluded from it.

Though Roy was concerned mainly with the objective forces, he had to combat a rival ideology in order to clear the ground for the development of his movement. The rise of Gandhism almost synchronised with the advent of Bolshevism in India. Roy considered the former as the ideology of reaction and therefore fought it with all the vehemence and fury of the class war.

Roy's Marxist outlook did not enable him to realise the significance of Gandhism in Indian politics. Gandhiji became the acknowledged leader of Indian nationalism not because of his philosophical views or economic doctrines but owing to a political necessity. For an unarmed nation fighting against British imperialism Gandhism was the most effective weapon. He was able to mobilise the large majority of the people irrespective of classes (though not of communities) to a struggle against the foreign rule in India. Had the British followed the ruthless methods of the Fascists or the Communists, Gandhism

72. OTI, pp. 120-123.

would have been crushed, and had there been any chance of a successful armed struggle being waged by India, Gandhism would have been brushed aside. Considering the conditions of India and the nature of the British rule, Gandhism appeared to be the most appropriate banner under which to launch the national struggle for independence. For a dependent people struggling for independence the call of nationalism was irresistible and all talks of economic programme and class struggle appeared either as putting the cart before the horse or a betrayal of the nation. Whatever might be the economic value of Gandhiji's Constructive Programme, it had a great organisational significance. Roy analysed Gandhism but he ignored its political necessity for India. His concept of organised insurrection was theoretically ill-conceived and practically untenable. His strategy based on an economic programme of class interest and an ultimate application of violence was most inappropriate for India. After the First World War secret political activities lost all prospects in India and under those conditions Roy's programme of a secret communist party organising the people on a large scale with the ultimate objective of challenging violently the British authorities in India appeared to be unpractical and futile.

## M. N. ROY AND MARXISM—THE SECOND PHASE (1936-46)

The second phase in Roy's Marxist career begins with his expulsion from the Communist International. It will not, therefore, be out of place here to discuss, in brief outline, the factors that led to his expulsion.

At first it is necessary to refer to the thesis adopted by the Sixth World Congress of the Communist International in 1928 on the problem of revolution in the colonial countries with which Roy differed fundamentally. The main report on the revolutionary movement in various colonial countries was placed before the Congress by Otto Vilhelm Kuusinen who in his report on India criticised severely Roy's theory of decolonisation. Because of an illness, Roy could not attend the Congress.

The Second World Congress of the Communist International gave rise to a controversy, as we have already discussed, between Roy and Lenin about the role of the bourgeoisie in the anti-imperialist struggle of the colonial people. The problem was not finally settled and the same controversy arose in all subsequent congresses. The Thesis of the Sixth World Congress of the Communist International<sup>1</sup> fully endorsed Roy's view that the bourgeois class was not a revolutionary force in India but the actual policy which it recommended for India was condemned by Roy in severe terms. The new colonial thesis adopted by the Communist International declared, contrary to Roy's views as expressed in the decolonisation thesis, that British Imperialism had again adopted the policy of hindering the industrial development of India and that the national bourgeois class, though it supports the national movement, betrays "a special vacillating compromising tendency" towards foreign imperialism. Thus, in spite of the difference about the theory of decolonisation, the Communist International adopted the same attitude towards the Indian bourgeoisie which Roy advocated since 1920. The Thesis considered the poor peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie as allies of the proletariat but it opposed the formation of any party con-

1. "Thesis on the Revolutionary Movement in the Colonies and Semi-Colonies", *Inprecor*, VIII (December 12, 1928). All subsequent quotations from the thesis are to be referred to this source.

sisting of the people belonging to these three classes, and it advised the Communist Parties "to demarcate themselves in the most clear-cut fashion, both politically and organisationally, from all the petty bourgeois groups and parties". The Indian Communists were instructed to rise as a "single, illegal, independent and centralized party" and to criticise the vacillating attitude of the petty bourgeois groups including the left wing of the Indian National Congress.

Leaving aside Kuusinen's diatribe against the decolonisation theory, the difference between Roy's view and that of the Communist International, in spite of the latter's acceptance of Roy's opinion on the role of the bourgeoisie, was fundamental.

First, Roy considered the Indian bourgeoisie as counter-revolutionary and firmly opposed any cooperation with them when he discovered an economic basis of the collaboration between foreign imperialism and native capitalism. But the thesis of the Sixth Congress of the Communist International did not admit any such basis of collaboration and stated that British Imperialism had returned to the policy of hindering the industrial development of India. If this was true, why then should the national bourgeoisie desert the struggle against foreign imperialism, asked Roy. "If they are still as oppressed as ever, and there is no prospect of their position being improved, they must," Roy argued, "remain a revolutionary factor."<sup>2</sup> He, therefore, condemned the resolution as full of glaring contradictions.

Secondly, Roy was opposed to the view adopted by the Thesis towards the peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie of India. The thesis recognised the revolutionary significance of the peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie but it prevented the Communists from organising any party on the basis of the alliance of these classes. In order to combat foreign imperialism and the native bourgeoisie, Roy, on the contrary, was in favour of a united front of all oppressed and exploited social elements and tried to form a party of the workers, peasants and the petty bourgeoisie under the leadership of the working class.

Thirdly, India was, Roy argued, in need mainly of a bourgeois democratic revolution, not, of course, under the leadership of the bourgeoisie but of the working class and he always insisted that Communism was not the immediate issue before the Indian Revolution. Therefore, a proletarian party alone, in

Roy's view, could not play a decisive part in the existing situation of India. The resolution of the Sixth Congress of the Communist International, Roy said, was based upon "a wrong estimation of the social character and the perspective of the development of the Indian revolution."<sup>3</sup>

Fourthly, Roy's attitude towards the Indian National Congress was different from what the Communist International accepted in the new thesis. Roy was opposed to the Congress leadership but not to the Congress organisation as such. He tried to form parties within the Congress and bring the Congress under revolutionary leadership. But the Comintern resolution of 1928 led the Communists to come out of the Congress denouncing it as counter-revolutionary. The C.P.I. under the instruction of the Communist International refused to make any distinction between "the objective revolutionary rank and file and the subjectively anti-revolutionary leadership of the Congress."<sup>4</sup> Roy was inclined to support the left wing within the Congress but the Comintern thesis of 1928 condemned the Left wing equally with the Right.

The Sixth World Congress of the Communist International in 1928 was followed by the expulsion of Roy from it in 1929. Roy's contribution to the Brandler Press and his support to the Brandler Organisation were mentioned in the official statement of the Communist International as reasons of his expulsion.<sup>5</sup> But neither this factor nor Roy's difference with the thesis of the Sixth World Congress of the Communist International can be accepted as the real cause of his expulsion. Roy's difference with the Communist International on the role of the bourgeoisie in colonial countries was not new, and his contribution to the Brandler press was the result rather than the cause of his estrangement with the Communist International. He fell into disfavour of the Comintern authorities before his contribution to the Brandler press. At first he was silently dropped without any formal notice of expulsion. Under such circumstances he raised his voice through the Brandler Press which brought about

3. *Ibid.*

4. *Ibid.*, p. 128.

5. *Inprecor*, IX (December 13, 1929), p. 1470. Heinz Brandler was a leading German Communist opposed to the policy of the Communist International. Roy was intimately known to him and he is frequently referred to in his Letters from Jail (M. N. Roy, *Fragments of a Prisoner's Diary*, Vol. III, *Letters from Jail*, 1943, pp. 55, 58).



his formal expulsion. As Roy himself wrote : "I was not declared a 'renegade' and placed outside the pale of the official International so long as I did not speak out my disagreement. The gag of silence was imposed upon me, the all-mighty apparatus depriving me of all the means of expression. In other words, for the unpardonable crime of independent thinking I would have been quietly buried into oblivion, had I not dared raise my voice."<sup>6</sup>

The failure of the Communist movement in China where Roy was sent in 1927 may have had some relation with this episode. It is not possible to describe here even in outline the intricacies of the Chinese politics and the different views of Roy and Borodin about the role the communists should play in it. Robert C. North and Xenia J. Eudin have suggested that Roy was possibly sacrificed by Stalin "as a major scapegoat for the China debacle."<sup>7</sup> "Some one" they write, "had to assume the responsibility for Comintern failures, and although in these circumstances Stalin was undoubtedly as much at fault as anyone, Roy was held accountable".<sup>8</sup> This hypothesis appears at least to be a very plausible one, particularly in view of the fact that soon after his return from China the Comintern salary of Roy was suddenly cut off.<sup>9</sup>

Apart from the Chinese debacle another factor that might have influenced the attitude of the Comintern towards Roy was the damaging account submitted by Saumyendra Nath Tagore to the Comintern authority in 1927 about the Communist Movement in India. About this episode Tagore himself writes :

'Piatnitsky, the then General Secretary of the Central Committee of Comintern, sent for Tagore and had a long talk regarding the work of the Communists in India. It was evident from the talk that quite a different picture of the Communist activities in India had been presented to the Comintern by

6. OD, pp. 42-43.

7. Robert C. North and Xenia J. Eudin, "M. N. Roy and the Theory of Decolonization", *The Radical Humanist* (July 12, 1959), p. 332. For details of Roy's role in China, see Robert C. North and Xenia J. Eudin, *M. N. Roy's Mission to China*, and M. N. Roy's *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in China*. (*My Experience in China* is a summary of *Revolution and Counter Revolution in China*).

8. *The Radical Humanist*, July 12, 1959, p. 332.

9. Robert C. North and Xenia J. Eudin, *M. N. Roy's Mission to China*, p. 126.

M. N. Roy. Piatnitsky had an idea that there were hundreds of Communists in India in those days. When Tagore told him about the actual number of Communists in India in those days, which did not exceed more than a dozen, Piatnitsky was quite taken aback. He said that it seemed unbelievable as Roy had reported the existence of hundreds of Communists in India.... It was also evident from the talk with Piatnitsky that the Comintern had given enormous sums to M. N. Roy for financing the Communist Movement in India. Tagore informed Piatnitsky that hardly any money had been received in India and the growth of the Communist Movement was tremendously handicapped due to the lack of money and literature.”<sup>10</sup>

Tagore thus brought two charges against Roy. He must have misappropriated the Comintern money and must have deceived the Comintern authorities by magnifying the number of the Communists in India. Were these charges valid? The Communist Movement in India was a secret movement and Tagore was not in it from the beginning. He was a staunch Gandhist since 1920, and, as he himself says, was attracted towards the Communist Movement by the first copy of ‘Langal’, the journal of the Bengal Workers and Peasants’ Party.<sup>11</sup> It is, therefore, very likely that he was not aware of all the facts of the Communist Movement in India. Muzaffar Ahmed writes that when Tagore left India for Europe, he had no knowledge of the Communist Movement of India as a whole though he was somewhat acquainted with the movement in Bengal.<sup>12</sup> Before Tagore left India, he was, Muzaffar Ahmed writes, called by the central office of the Communist Party in Bombay but he did not meet them.<sup>13</sup> The report which he submitted to the Communist International about the movement in India was, in

10. Saumyendra Nath Tagore, *Historical Development of Communist Movement in India*, p. 10. The book is edited and published by Polit Bureau, C. C. Revolutionary Communist Party of India without mentioning the name of the author, and therefore, it is written in the third person.

11. The Bengali Weekly, *Langal (Plough)*, was first started by the Labour Swaraj Party on December 16, 1925, and then it was continued by the Peasants’ and Workers’ Party of Bengal which absorbed the Labour Swaraj Party.

12. Muzaffar Ahmed, *Prabashe Bharater Communist Party Gathan*, (in Bengali), p. 160.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 155.

the opinion of Muzaffar Ahmed, a figment of his imagination.<sup>14</sup> Tagore writes that there was no Communist Party in India even in 1927.<sup>15</sup> This was a travesty of the truth because a Communist Party was formed by Roy's followers taking advantage of the conference organised by Satya Bhakta at Cawnpore in December 1925.<sup>16</sup>

The following account about the Communist Movement in India in 1927 written by Tagore himself is not consistent with the report which he submitted to the Comintern authority. Referring to the annual session of the Trade Union Congress held in Cawnpore in November 1927, he writes : "This was also the first annual session of the T.U.C. to hoist the red flag. Bengal and Bombay comrades came in large numbers to attend the conference, also Shaukat Usmani and Sohan Singh Josh from the Punjab. It was felt at this period that the time had come when the various Communist groups scattered throughout India should be co-ordinated by the creation of a centralised Communist Party of India."<sup>17</sup> In Tagore's own admission, therefore, there were 'various communist groups scattered throughout India' and a large number of comrades in Bombay and Bengal in 1927. Does this picture tally with the 'facts' submitted by him to Piatnitsky? The Communist movement of India, it is true, suffered from lack of funds and there was a good deal of misunderstanding between Roy and his comrades in India on that account.<sup>18</sup> But Roy also had to work under great difficulties and had to spend a good deal to send communist literature and journals to India through clandestine channels. Therefore sober students have no other alternative than to accept the conclusion of Overstreet and Windmiller that "it is not fair to accuse him of misappropriation of funds, on the basis of the evidence presently available."<sup>19</sup> Whether Tagore's charges were true or not, they must have influenced the authorities of the Comintern.

There was a mystery about the Indian representatives to the

14. *Ibid.*, p. 160.

15. Saumyendra Nath Tagore, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

16. Overstreet and Windmiller, *op. cit.*, pp. 77-79; Muzaffar Ahmed, *Communist Party of India : Years of Formation 1921-1923*, pp. 19-20.

17. Saumyendra Nath Tagore, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-12.

18. D. Petrie, *Communism in India, 1924-1927* (compiled by the Intelligence Bureau, Home Department, Government of India), pp. 10, 107.

19. Overstreet and Windmiller, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

Sixth Comintern Congress who played an important part in discrediting Roy. Tagore was present there with a mandate of the Workers' and Peasants' Party of Bengal and not of the C.P.I.<sup>20</sup> Shaukat Usmani attended the Congress but without any mandate from the party. Tagore writes that Usmani informed his party comrades about his plan to leave for Moscow but the party clique refused to give him a mandate.<sup>21</sup> Philip Spratt gives a different account and says that Shaukat Usmani decided to attend the Sixth Congress and went via Iran, taking three others with him "without telling the rest of us."<sup>22</sup> Muzaffar Ahmed agrees with Spratt's account and he mentions the names of the three persons who accompanied Usmani to Moscow. They were Muhammad Shafiq, Habib Ahmed Nasim, and Masud Ali Shah.<sup>23</sup> Philip Spratt received a cable from London in which he was asked if Usmani represented the party. Spratt naturally gave a negative reply to it.<sup>24</sup> A letter also reached the Comintern from the Indian Party informing it that Usmani did not represent the party at all.<sup>25</sup> Muzaffar Ahmed says that this information reached Moscow long after the Sixth Congress was over.<sup>26</sup> In the Congress Usmani spoke against Roy<sup>27</sup> and was elected to the Presidium of the Comintern Congress. The three companions of Usmani who went with him to attend the Congress were detained in Russia and were shot as spies in Moscow.<sup>28</sup> When Usmani came to know of it in Meerut jail he, Spratt says, "began to behave queerly, in fact underwent what would be called a nervous breakdown. He asked to be separated from the rest of us, and left the party, and I believe has never rejoined."<sup>29</sup> The whole episode appears to be a mysterious one. Roy's

20. Saumyendra Nath Tagore, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 13. Usmani was among the Muslim Pilgrims (Muhajirum) who left British India after World War I and was turned into a communist by Roy. See Overstreet and Windmiller, *op. cit.*, pp. 34-35.

22. Philip Spratt, *Blowing up India*, p. 41.

23. Muzaffar Ahmed, *Prabhashe Bharater Communist Party Gathan* (in Bengali), p. 91.

24. Philip Spratt, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

25. Saumyendra Nath Tagore, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

26. Muzaffar Ahmed, *Prabhashe Bharater Communist Party Gathan* (in Bengali), p. 91.

27. *Inprecor*, VIII (October 4, 1928), p. 1248.

28. Philip Spratt, *op. cit.*, pp. 41-42.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 42.

statement that he was the victim of some internal intrigue appears to be very plausible.<sup>30</sup>

Apart from this intrigue, Roy maintains that "the internal struggle of the Russian Communist Party also contributed to my victimization."<sup>31</sup> This factor also cannot be entirely ruled out. Philip Spratt also thinks that the change of the Comintern policy in the Sixth World Congress was the result "mainly of internal disputes in the Russian Party."<sup>32</sup> The monster of Stalin's dictatorship was rising by that time. The First Five Year Plan in Russia was inaugurated in 1928 and Stalin stood for complete conformism within the party. Lenin might have tolerated Roy's views on the national and colonial question but Stalin tried to make himself an undisputed leader. The tradition of the Moscow Trial had not yet begun and therefore Roy was able to leave Moscow with head on his shoulder.

After his expulsion from the Communist International M. N. Roy came back to India in disguise in 1930. He was arrested in July 1931 in Bombay on the old warrant issued seven years ago in connection with the Cawnpore Bolshevik Conspiracy Case of 1924. He was prosecuted in Cawnpore and in January 1932 he was sentenced to imprisonment for twelve years. The sentence was reduced on appeal to six years and he was released on 20 November 1936. The period from 1936 to 1946 forms another epoch in the evolution of the political ideas of Roy. He changed his views, in some cases radically, on the perspective, strategy, tactics and ideology of the Indian Revolution. It is necessary to discuss these views comparing them with his ideas held previously. Expulsion from the Communist International did not undermine his faith in Marxism or loyalty to Russia. But it enable him to think independently and he was no longer required to comply with the instructions of the Communist International.

In the second stage of his Marxist career Roy's views on the position and role of the different classes of the Indian people in the struggle for independence were, in some respects, profoundly altered. His view remained unchanged about the feudal lords and the capitalists, but he revised his view completely about the role of the petty bourgeoisie, workers and along with workers the peasants also.

30. OD, p. ii.

31. *Ibid.*, p. ii.

32. Philip Spratt, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

The urban petty bourgeois class was now recognised by Roy as the leader of the Indian Revolution not so much due to its economic position as to its education and cultural development. The education which the members of this class received qualified them, according to his new analysis, to play the role of the grave-diggers of their exploiters, but the working class of India, he pointed out, was culturally too backward to supply leadership for a revolutionary reconstruction of the Indian society.<sup>33</sup> Possibly in order to satisfy his Marxist conscience Roy still referred to the proletarian hegemony over the revolutionary movement in India. As he then put it: "the petty bourgeois intelligentsia, in collaboration with the revolutionary vanguard of the proletariat, can provide the necessary alternative leadership. The next stage of the Indian revolution must develop under that type of leadership—under the hegemony (not leadership) of the proletariat."<sup>34</sup> Explaining the meaning of 'proletarian hegemony' as distinguished from 'proletarian leadership', Roy wrote: "If it is to be conceived as something distinct from leadership, hegemony must mean ideological influence, proportionately much greater than the physical strength."<sup>35</sup> Although the proletariat is a negligible factor in India, it has been formed, Roy pointed out, as a distinct class on a world scale and consequently the proletarian ideology has also grown. This ideology will exercise its influence not only in those countries where the proletariat is in a dominant position but throughout the world. The hegemony of the proletariat, therefore, in the last analysis, means the hegemony of Marxism. And in India, Roy maintained, Marxism would influence the course of revolution not through the proletariat but through the brain of the petty bourgeoisie.<sup>36</sup> Deprecating the practice of idealising the proletariat Roy observed: "Our vision should not be coloured by our imagination. The revolutionary zeal of the ideological vanguard should not be ascribed to the workers, who strike simply for higher wages and other minor ameliorations."<sup>37</sup> This sentence appears to be a cryptic one pregnant with new ideas. If the revolutionary zeal of the ideological vanguard of the proletariat is not to be traced to the workers' class struggle

33. SP, pp. 93-94.

34. OD, p. 123.

35. SP, p. 163.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 109.

37. OD, p. 15.

then what is its basis? Roy did not answer the question. For a Marxist such a view must be a heresy. Roy continued to believe, as before, that the Indian Revolution would be the joint product of a coalition of the oppressed and exploited classes, namely, the peasants, the workers and the petty bourgeoisie, but his idea about the relative importance of these three classes was, however, profoundly modified.

The change in Roy's views about the role of the petty bourgeoisie and the workers in India is remarkable. How was this change brought about? And what are the implications of this change? These questions naturally arise.

Dr Dhar has referred briefly to the change brought about in the ideas of Roy during this period and he remarks: "After Roy had come out of the Indian jail, we found that he was now holding a rather neo-Marxian position and his views had started becoming more and more liberal."<sup>37a</sup> Trying to explain this change in his ideas Dr Dhar observes: "His disillusionment with the working in Russia of the dictatorship of the proletariat which was to be highly democratic in content if not always in form and which in effect meant nothing but undiluted dictatorship of a few party-officials might have something to lead him to temper his version of Marxism with the liberal views of the state."<sup>37b</sup> This explanation can hardly be accepted. The views of Roy regarding the Russian state and government which he held during this period were thoroughly explained by him, and a study of these views clearly indicates that he was still a staunch supporter of the Russian system.<sup>37c</sup> The change in Roy's ideas can reasonably be explained with reference to his new experience in India. As long as he guided the communist movement of India from abroad, he imagined the conditions in India more in the light of the Marxist theory than on the basis of any empirical evidence. By applying the Marxist doctrine of economic determinism he hoped that a party of the workers and peasants was bound to develop in India as a formidable force and that the hold of the religious doctrine of Gandhism could not remain long upon the mind of the people. The rise of the labour movement and the peasants organisation in India was consequently interpreted by him as evidence of an awakening of revolutionary class consciousness among the workers and

37a. Niranjan Dhar, *The Political Thought of M. N. Roy*, p. 140.

37b. *Ibid.*, p. 140.

37c. See Chapter IV.

peasants. He believed that by an inexorable process brought about by objective conditions, the Indian masses would move away from the present leadership of the Congress. But when he came to India in 1930, he saw a different picture. There was a wide gulf between what he imagined and what he found. The Indian proletariat—hitherto considered by Roy as the guiding centre of the Indian revolution—disappointed him completely. It was, he found, not only numerically weak but also “socially immature” and “politically backward” without “the rudimentary ideas of class struggle.”<sup>38</sup> Soon after reaching Bombay in disguise from abroad Roy attended a large mass meeting of the workers which to him was altogether disappointing. Describing his experience he wrote : “I came closer to find that most of the audience were dozing or actually sleeping. The only sign of life was thin wisps of *bidi* smoke here and there.”<sup>39</sup> It was a shocking experience for Roy. He himself remarked : “The first experience in Bombay and similar experience later on convinced me how delusive was the picture imagined from the newspaper reports of large meetings and demonstrations.”<sup>40</sup> He found that in spite of seething discontent there was no symptom of any widespread revolutionary awakening among the peasants who had complete confidence in Mahatma Gandhi and the Indian National Congress. Almost all the big trade unions, he saw, were under reformist leadership and most of the prominent Trade Union leaders were Congressmen.<sup>41</sup> The petty bourgeoisie, the much maligned class in Marxist literature to which Roy himself contributed liberally, was found to be “the most active political element” in Indian politics having contact with the masses.<sup>42</sup>

Indian politics, therefore, refused to develop itself in accordance with the Marxist prognosis of M. N. Roy. What Roy predicted with confidence to be inevitable in Indian politics did not take place. Roy proved to be a false prophet. How did Roy react to his experience? He could, like an orthodox Marxist, have tried to interpret (rather, to imagine) facts to fit into his theoretical pattern. Or, he might have given up the doctrine of Marxism and developed a new philosophy more in

38. OD, p. 119.

39. SP, p. 256.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 257.

41. OD, pp. 119-20.

42. *Ibid.*, pp. 120-121.



accordance with the reality of the situation. Roy, however, adopted neither of these two courses. He was too objective to quarrel with facts and too much indoctrinated by Marxism to give it up easily. To come out of the dilemma Roy gave a new interpretation to Marxism—"a broader understanding of Marxism,"<sup>43</sup> as he called it—differentiating it from the narrow and mechanical interpretation.

The fundamental lesson that Roy drew from his experience was that "the most important and decisive factor in a revolution is the subjective factor."<sup>44</sup> He lost his confidence in the sovereignty of the objective forces of history and the inexorable law of social dialectics operating through the class struggle. Belying his expectation and confident prediction, Gandhism continued to remain as strong as ever and the workers and peasants developed no class consciousness of their own. The objective factors of history had failed to assert themselves. The exploited masses did not move ahead by objective dynamism leaving Gandhism behind, as anticipated by Roy. Trying to explain this phenomenon he wrote : "The fact that even in this 20th century India is swayed by the naive doctrine of Gandhi speaks for cultural backwardness of the masses of the Indian people."<sup>44a</sup> "Gandhism", he stated several years later, "could not influence the mass mind unless there was a predisposition. The mediaeval mentality of the culturally backward masses makes them easy victims of the Gandhist propaganda."<sup>45</sup> To combat Gandhism, therefore, the mediaeval mentality of the Indian people must be changed. In other words, the subjective factor must be created. Roy's politics thus came to attach supreme importance to education, culture and human ideas. This was the beginning of the end of Marxism. The emphasis on education, ideas and cultural factors could not be fitted into the Marxist theory of economic determinism. To make his ideas compatible with the facts of the Indian situation, Roy now tried to give Marxism, as we have already mentioned, a new interpretation which, in fact, was the very negation of the essential spirit of the Marxist philosophy. In the name of Marxism he developed a set of new ideas which gradually, aided by further experience, liberated themselves from the Marxist

43. SP, p. 207.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 107.

44a. *Jail Volumes*, IV, p. 71(a).

45. SP, p. 230

terminology and gave rise to a new social philosophy called New Humanism.

Roy's hostility to Gandhism continued unabated, it was in fact intensified; he went to the length of equating Gandhism with Fascism. In prison Roy wrote a book on Fascism analysing its philosophy, profession and practice in which he pointed out that Fascism was not simply a socio-political phenomenon but had a deep-rooted philosophical foundation. "If Fascism is a socio-political reaction," Roy wrote, "its ideological foundation must have been laid by philosophical reaction."<sup>46</sup> The roots of the philosophy of Fascism were traced by him to the spiritualist view of life. He observed: "As a matter of fact, the philosophy of Fascist dictatorship results directly from the modern schools of mysticism and spiritualism which represent reaction against the scientific view of life"<sup>47</sup>. Religion and the cults of mysticism and spiritualism associated with it are, he thought, always useful to maintain a social order based on the exploitation of man by man. Religion is based upon faith, and faith, Roy explained, placed a premium on ignorance, which makes the masses easy victims of exploitation. In its fight against feudal society and monarchical absolutism the bourgeoisie used the revolutionary weapon of the materialist philosophy, but once in possession of power it discarded this weapon and championed the spiritualist view of life in order to perpetuate the social system based upon the exploitation of many. Fascism, according to Roy, was the logical outcome of this reactionary philosophical tendency.

The Indian philosophy because of its spiritual character stood, in Roy's analysis, very near Fascism. He called Indian philosophy as inherently Fascist<sup>48</sup>. The Indian ancestry of Fascism, according to Roy, could be traced through Schopenhauer whose disciple, Nietzsche, was the father of the philosophy of Fascism. Schopenhauer found consolation in the philosophy of the Upanishads—a philosophy which in Roy's words "prevented the Indian people from facing the realities of life with the courage to change them"<sup>49</sup>. The roots of the Fascist thought were traced by Roy even to the divine philosophy of the Gita.

46. *F*, p. 2.

47. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 32.

49. *Ibid.*, p. 41.

The philosophy of Gandhism is based upon a spiritual view of life and that led Roy to equate it with Fascism. He observed: "If Gandhism is to be regarded as a body of religio-ethical doctrines, the quintessence of ancient Indian culture, then the world has already experienced its modern political expression. Gandhism as a philosophical tradition has led to Hitlerism"<sup>50</sup>. Roy referred to genealogical kinship between Gandhism and Fascism, both being offsprings of the spiritual view of life. Both are inspired by the revivalist ideal and deny the progressive significance of modern civilization<sup>51</sup>. Roy made a clear distinction between revolutionary nationalism and revivalist nationalism in India and maintained that while the former was revolutionary the latter was reactionary.<sup>52</sup> Revolutionary nationalism, which seeks to overthrow foreign imperialism as the essential precondition of further social progress, was not, he pointed out, antagonistic to socialism, but, on the contrary, its consummation would create conditions necessary for its ultimate establishment.<sup>53</sup> But revivalist nationalism would lead the country to Fascism because, Fascism was described by Roy as nationalism inspired by the revivalist ideal.<sup>54</sup> The ideal of class collaboration was another feature common both to Gandhism and Fascism. This ideal, according to Roy, would inevitably lead to violence, because, as he stated, "class collaboration means violent suppression of the efforts of the toiling masses to liberate themselves from the system of exploitation. Class collaboration means stabilization of class domination. This requires violence exercised by the dominating class. Gandhist ideal of class collaboration involves violence. The cult of non-violence is, therefore, hypocritical. It supports actual violence".<sup>55</sup> The Gandhian ideal of simple life and the vow of poverty would, Roy thought, keep the masses spell-bound and that would enable the Congress to further the interests of the nationalist bourgeoisie and loyalist landlords.<sup>56</sup> Roy, therefore, condemned Gandhism as a philosophy of counter-revolution. The assumption of a logical connection between Gandhism and Fascism determined in large

50. *Ibid.*, p. 47.

51. GNS, p. 83.

52. F or F, p. 3.

53. GNS, p. 119.

54. F, p. 40.

55. GNS, p. 23.

56. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

measure Roy's attitude towards the leadership of the Indian National Congress and the Indian independence movement in general.

The logical relation which Roy postulated between Fascism and the spiritualist view of life was a dangerous illusion. Spiritualism endows man with a sanctity of which Fascism is the complete negation. The origin of Fascism may logically be traced to the ideas of Nietzsche who disowned the spiritualist tradition of Christianity. Even after coming back to India, Roy was able to comprehend neither the moral excellence of Gandhian doctrines nor the political significance of the Gandhian strategy.<sup>56a</sup> Class collaboration and non-violence were politically necessary for a united struggle of the Indian people against alien rule. Judged as a doctrine, Gandhism was more akin to Christian socialism than to Fascism. Gandhi was the political leader of the Indian masses, and, therefore, instead of trying to change the mass psychology he sought to utilise it for realising his objective. That determined, to a large extent, the pattern of Gandhian politics. Roy was too crude and perhaps a little too 'logical' to comprehend the diverse factors that accounted for the popularity of Gandhism in India. He ignored the strategical significance of Gandhism and made a wrong analysis of the Gandhian philosophy. Therefore all his attempts to undermine the influence of Gandhism in Indian politics failed.

Roy tried to replace Gandhism by Marxism though his explanation of Marxism during this period was largely influenced by his experience. He now interpreted Marxism as essentially a philosophy, and the economic doctrines and political theories associated with Marxism were considered as its subsidiary parts only. In his writings of this period he gave emphasis mainly upon three aspects of the Marxian philosophy. First, Marxism was interpreted as the logical outcome of the rationalist and materialist thoughts of man. Tracing the origin of Marxism to the old materialist thoughts of Greece, Roy observed: "Between Democritus and Epicurus and Marx there was a continuous line of development, tracing which Marx could only come to his conclusions".<sup>57</sup> Thus interpreted, Marxism became a 'human heritage' and not the philosophy of any particular class.<sup>58</sup> Ridiculing the orthodox interpretation of Marxism as

56a. See Nirmal Kumar Bose, *Studies in Gandhism*, pp. 316-321.

57. HTC, p. 127.

58. SP, p. 182.

the philosophy of a particular class, Roy wrote : "There is so much talk about class culture and class philosophy and class ideology. One cannot claim the distinction of being a Marxist, unless he qualified every concept with the term 'Class' ! Only, that is a dubious distinction. That may befit an ordinary political propagandist; but a Marxist deserving the distinction is primarily a philosopher".<sup>59</sup> In Roy's mind the concept of humanity was gradually replacing the concept of class. Not that he gave up the idea of class struggle, but along with it he began to refer occasionally to the cohesive factor in society and to humanity as a whole.<sup>60</sup> The cultural progress of man, he emphasised, would have been impossible if all cultures were simply class cultures to be replaced in course of time by another class culture. A culture, Roy pointed out, may bear the stamp of a class but "in so far as there is a relation of identity between that class and the entire society, the cultural values produced by it are the production of society as a whole".<sup>61</sup>

The second aspect of Marxism which Roy during this period emphasised followed logically from his view of Marxism as the highest product of the rational thoughts of man rather than a class ideology. Rationalism being the essential feature of Marxism, Roy considered it not as a system of doctrines or a bunch of dogmas but 'rather a method'.<sup>62</sup> Roy made a distinction between Marxism as a method and its specific formulas or doctrines. As a method, Marxism, according to Roy, was a way of thinking and its fundamental principle is that consciousness is determined by existence. This Marxian method, he said, has a permanent and abiding value and holds good for all time and under all circumstances and applicable to the problems of all ages. But unlike the Marxian method, the formulas of Marxism, Roy pointed out, are not immutable and may have to be changed from time to time. Dictatorship of the proletariat was one such Marxist formula. In the process of development of the Indian Revolution, Roy showed that there was no room for a proletarian dictatorship and therefore it must be discarded.<sup>63</sup> The distinction that Roy drew between the Marxist

59. *Ibid.*, pp. 182-183.

60. *Ibid.*, p. 110.

61. *Ibid.*, p. 183.

62. M. N. Roy and K. K. Sinha, *Royism Explained*, p. 22.

63. *SP*, pp. 210-211.

method and the Marxist formula is very significant. By applying this method, he said, one should try "to elaborate, amplify and even revise Marxism" in the light of growing experience and knowledge.<sup>64</sup> Once the 'essence' of Marxism was accepted "it is not necessary for us", Roy maintained, "even to abide by the letters of what Marx has written".<sup>65</sup>

The third principle emphasised by Roy in his interpretation of Marxism was the freedom of man in the making of history. Marx wrote : "The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point, however, is to change it". This bold declaration by Marx recognising the freedom of man to change his environment was, as Roy himself later fully realised, negated by Marx's economic interpretation of history, but at this stage Roy tried to reconcile the two, obviously with little success. In his lecture on 'What is Marxism' Roy condemned the economic interpretation of history as 'a vulgar interpretation of Marxism' and preferred the expression "materialistic interpretation of history".<sup>66</sup> But this is a difference without any distinction. In the same lecture approving the Marxist law of history Roy observed : "Man's ideas are determined not by his environments as such, but by the mode of production through which he earns his livelihood".<sup>67</sup> Explaining the evolution of human society Roy wrote that "the everchanging standards of human behaviour, the circumstances of living, the structure of society, the successive stages of social evolution—all these are determined by one factor, namely, the mode in which the particular community makes its livelihood".<sup>68</sup> Roy's refusal to accept the expression 'economic interpretation of history' thus had no philosophical foundation. Most probably it was an expression of a conflict within his mind—his reluctance to equate freedom simply with an economic struggle. This conflict was clearly expressed when he said : "People think in terms of capital and labour, as if revolutionaries were a gang of selfish people fighting for a few annas for themselves. But a true revolutionary is not ashamed of declaring that he is not fighting merely for wages; that he is fighting even for the welfare of those who are against revolution. The revolutionaries of to-day are fight-

64. M. N. Roy and K. K. Sinha, *Royism Explained*, p. 22.

65. *Ibid.*, p. 22.

66. HTC, p. 109.

67. *Ibid.*, p. 118.

68. M. N. Roy (ed.), *Man and Nature*, Introduction, p. 15.

ing for the liberation of mankind. The revolution of our epoch will, for the first time, conquer spiritual freedom for humanity".<sup>69</sup> This concept of revolution was not in harmony with the Marxian concepts of class-division and economic fundamentalism. To make human freedom possible, the philosophy of history must endow man with free will in order to enable him to play along with other factors a creative role in history. Roy tried to reconcile the creative role of man with the Marxist theory of history. He wrote : "But in the light of scientific research he (Marx) proved that man lives in certain environments, but at the same time man reacts on those environments and shapes them by his reactions. He is not an actor on the stage walking over it, detached and untouched, a prescribed route. But he is a part of the stage itself. His movements are determined by his environments in as much as these include his own being. Thus he has become not only the maker and master of his environments including his own self, but he has become the maker of history".<sup>70</sup> One reads the passage in vain to discover any scope for human freedom. If the causative factors of history are all to be traced to the environment, the arguments in favour of any creative role of man in the making of history become simply casuistry. In order to make human freedom compatible with the Marxist scheme of history Roy denied that history was reduced to an inevitable process by Karl Marx. He wrote : "There is actually nothing inevitable in history. The concept of inevitability is unknown in Marxian philosophy. Because inevitability is only another name for fatalism, that is, predestination. Marxism places man in the centre of the world".<sup>71</sup> This interpretation gives man a creative role to play in history but it goes against the entire spirit of Marxist historiology. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels categorically stated in *Manifesto of the Communist Party* : "What the bourgeoisie, therefore, produces, above all, is its own grave-diggers. Its fall and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable".<sup>72</sup> Marx frankly denied the freedom of man to shape history and he reduced history to an inevitable process. In a letter to P. V. Annenkov, Marx wrote : "Are men free to choose this or that form of society ?

69. SP, p. 313.

70. HTC, p. 117.

71. M. N. Roy, *The Future of Socialism*, p. 14.

72. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1949), p. 63.

By no means . . . . . It is superfluous to add that men are not free arbiters of their productive forces which are the basis of all their history—for every productive force is an acquired force, the product of former activity”.<sup>73</sup>

As a matter of fact, Roy's interpretation of Marxism during this period was muddle-headed. In the name of Marxism he expressed his own ideas born of his experience, but they remained clumsy because of his attempt to integrate them with the Marxist doctrine. The interpretation of Marxism as the highest product of the rationalist trend of human thought was misleading. The Marxists do not believe that human ideas can be influenced by *reason as such*, apart from the economic interests of the class. The rationalist philosophy of the French Enlightenment, as for example, was to them “nothing more than the idealised kingdom of the bourgeoisie”.<sup>74</sup> The key to social change, according to the Marxists, lies not in philosophy but in economics. Friedrich Engels explained this theory clearly : “From this point of view the final causes of all social changes and political revolutions are to be sought, not in men's brains, not in men's better insight into eternal truth and justice, but in changes in the modes of production and exchange. They are to be sought, not in the *philosophy*, but in the *economics* of each particular epoch”.<sup>75</sup> Dictatorship of the proletariat which Roy discarded as a non-essential part of Marxism was considered by Marx himself as of paramount significance.<sup>76</sup> There was little of ‘Marxism’ in Roy's interpretation of it. The seeds of New Humanism must be traced to the interpretation which Roy gave to Marxism during this period.

In this period Roy's ideas about the nature and perspective of the Indian Revolution did not undergo any vital change. The bourgeois democratic revolution in India would take place without the cooperation of the bourgeoisie and it was to be engineered by a coalition of the oppressed and exploited classes

73. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. II, (Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1949), p. 401.

74. Friedrich Engels, *Socialism : Utopian and Scientific*, Karl Marx, and Friedrich Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. II (Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1949), p. 108.

75. *Ibid.*, p. 125.

76. Letter of Marx to Weydemeyer, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. II, (Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1949), p. 410.



of India. The main implication of Roy's concept of a bourgeois democratic revolution without the bourgeoisie was the possibility of India's reaching the stage of socialism without passing through the period of capitalist exploitation and proletarian dictatorship. The concept of such a revolution was, as we have already mentioned, developed by him abroad but it became more prominent during this period. In order to establish socialism, its pre-conditions, such as the industrialisation of the country and the growth of the working class on a large scale, abolition of the feudal restrictions on production, etc., must first be created. To create these preconditions the capitalist mode of production, Roy maintained, was essential, and the fundamental feature of the capitalist mode of production, he explained, is the production of surplus value by which the workers are deprived of a part of the fruit of their labour. This is necessary for the accumulation of capital and the industrial progress of the country. Under capitalist rule the workers are forcibly deprived of this part for the benefit of individual capitalists. But labourers may voluntarily part with a portion of the fruit of their labour by common agreement, and if the process is a voluntary one, the period of the industrial development of the country should, Roy said, be regarded as an integral part of the process of socialist reconstruction.<sup>77</sup> In Russia under the Bolshevik rule, Roy believed, industrial development took place by this voluntary method and he tried to develop the Indian revolution in the same way. The perspective of the revolution described above excludes the necessity of the proletarian dictatorship. In 1935 he wrote : "It is foolish romanticism to aim at proletarian dictatorship in the near future in this country; and it may not be an indispensable necessity later on".<sup>78</sup> The bourgeois democratic revolution in India brought about by a coalition of the oppressed and exploited classes, under the hegemony of the ideological vanguard of the proletariat would, Roy thought, give effective power to the masses which would make proletarian dictatorship redundant.

By this time Roy was clearly opposed to proletarian dictatorship but he did not accept parliamentary democracy. Then what would be the nature of the state that would entrust the people with effective power? His ideas in this respect were

<sup>77</sup> GNS, p. 121.

<sup>78</sup> OD, p. 139.

not yet very clear. During this period he referred to a "genuinely democratic government" for India as distinguished from "an ordinary capitalist state".<sup>79</sup> He was obviously trying to find out a governmental system different from parliamentary democracy and proletarian dictatorship. The basis of the new state, he said, would not be atomised individuals but organised units through which the people would be able to exercise direct control over the Government. Parliamentary Democracy would thus be replaced by a higher type of democracy. In 1944 Roy published his Draft Constitution of India where he gave a concrete picture of this higher type of democracy to which he gave the name 'Radical Democracy'. This Radical Democracy was incorporated in the philosophy of Radical Humanism and we shall explain it at a later stage.

Roy tried to bring about the necessary revolution in India through the Congress guided by a revolutionary leadership. His analysis about the role and nature of the Congress remained almost unchanged. It was a potentially revolutionary movement saddled with a reactionary leadership, and therefore the main task of the Indian Revolution, according to Roy, was to supply a new leadership—an alternative revolutionary leadership—to the Congress movement. The revolutionary potentialities of the Congress, he maintained, could not develop under the Gandhian leadership. But, he observed: "The leadership of the Congress is not the Congress. There is objective contradiction between the present leadership which is under the influence of the middle bourgeoisie, and the Congress as a movement. There is social basis for an alternative radical democratic leadership to replace the present outfit. The rise of such a leadership is necessary for the next stage of the revolution".<sup>80</sup>

In the first stage of his Marxist career also Roy considered the Congress movement as of great revolutionary significance and tried to bring it under the leadership of a revolutionary peoples' party—a party of workers and peasants—formed within the Congress. But this strategy was now entirely given up by Roy. He was now opposed to the formation of any party within the Congress and he, therefore, tried to bring the whole movement under a revolutionary leadership. The reason of this change is not far to seek. By applying the Marxian analysis of history

79 GNS, p. 108.

80. OD, p. 122.

as an inevitable process brought about by the objective conditions of society, Roy firmly believed that a party of the exploited class was bound to rise in India outgrowing the reactionary influence of Gandhism. The revolutionaries were simply to lead and hasten the inevitable process. But experience, as we have seen, dispelled this optimism. Roy found that the religious mentality of the people was the mainstay of Gandhism, and the rise of a revolutionary party was conditional upon the change of this mentality. The change of the religious mentality of the people in favour of the scientific mode of thought would undermine the hold of Gandhism and thus facilitate the rise of an alternative revolutionary leadership. Formation of a revolutionary group within the Congress without first trying to change the religious mentality of the people was considered by him as futile. The programme of alternative leadership, however, did not, it appears, exclude the possibility of a division of the Congress in the long run. During this period Roy gave up all attempts to organise secret political activities. Direct experience of the country must have convinced him of the futility of such activities.

Another consideration that determined Roy's strategy during this time was the organisational character of the Congress. He was very much impressed by the countrywide net of primary committees built up by it. These committees, he believed, could be used as the basic units of the future democratic state of India. He referred to the dual character of the Congress organisation—a political party, and the framework of a new state.<sup>81</sup> These committees would enable the Indian people to raise the structure of a revolutionary state within the womb of imperialism, and then challenge the latter in an organised rebellion. In order to use the Congress Committees for this revolutionary purpose Roy tried to bring the Congress movement under the revolutionary leadership instead of forming groups or parties within it. He asked: "If a certain section of the masses lose their confidence in the Congress and leave it, is there any guarantee that another organisation equally powerful as the Congress would be established in the country?"<sup>82</sup>

In this connection it would not be out of place to refer briefly to Roy's concept of 'organised' revolution. The Indian

81. M. N. Roy, *On the Congress Constitution*, p. 29.

82. *Independent India*, I, (February 6, 1938), p. 8.

revolution, he pointed out, must be an organised one, unlike those of the previous age such as in France or in Russia. This difference was due to the character of the modern state which is highly organised and well-equipped. In France a spontaneous mass uprising led to the capture of power in Paris and the whole state collapsed as a result. Similar was the case in Russia also. Those revolutions did not require for their success a country-wide organisation. But in the modern age, conditions were, Roy pointed out, entirely different. The state is now-a-days so well-organised that any idea of the capture of power in Delhi or Calcutta was inconceivable. Unlike the previous revolutions which began in the capital, the revolutionary movement in India, Roy explained, would begin on the periphery and then converge in the centre. Therefore, he maintained that in India capture of power must be "an organised process."<sup>83</sup> The seven lakhs of villages must be organised, and these organised units would not only initiate struggles against imperialism on various issues concerning the day to day life of the people but would also serve as the basic units of the future democratic state of the country. Roy had similar ideas while abroad but now he found that the already established local Congress Committees could function in a revolutionary crisis as instruments of mass uprisings and become the basic units of the revolutionary state. Roy tried to develop the Congress as a pyramidal structure on the basis of these Committees. Throughout the country there would come into existence two parallel organisations—one, the pyramidal structure of the Congress Committees enjoying the confidence of the people, and the other, the machinery of the imperialist state, hated by the people and supported only by a handful of mercenaries.<sup>84</sup> Under such circumstances Roy thought it would be quite possible for the Congress to replace the Imperialist state in a simultaneous bid for power throughout the country. With supreme self-confidence amounting to an under-estimation of the forces of the opponent, Roy, like the Italian patriot Mazzini, declared: "Compare the Congress organisation in the district with the local machinery of the Imperial state. Can there be any doubt about the outcome of a trial of strength between the two? What power has the machinery of the Imperialist state in this district to prevent the Congress Com-

83. SP, p. 240.

84. *Independent India*, III (January 29, 1939), p. 76.

mittee from assuming the functions of the Government?"<sup>85</sup> The Congress with the demand "All power to the local Congress Committees" would supersede the machinery of the Imperialist state and would convert itself into the Constituent Assembly in order to frame the constitution of the new state<sup>86</sup> Upto this point the revolutionary movement would proceed without splitting a drop of blood or committing any violence. But what would happen after that? Would not the British Government retaliate? How would that offensive be met? Roy answered: "What will happen next does not depend on us. Having asserted our right of self-determination, we shall naturally have to be guided only by such codes and laws as are binding on all nations, whose freedom is at stake. If at that moment, India would not be prepared to defend her newly won freedom by all means, she does not deserve to be free...."<sup>87</sup> Roy here indicated that India under such circumstances must defend herself by all means, violent or non-violent. He left the matter there. To wage the struggle successfully, the Congress must first of all be transformed into a well-knit disciplined party with its primary local committees manned by active and conscious revolutionaries liberated from the paralysing grip of Gandhism. In other words, the Congress must be given an alternative leadership.

Roy suggested two methods to bring about the necessary alternative leadership. One was political, and the other and more significant one was intellectual or philosophical.

The Congress was composed very largely of the oppressed and exploited people of India and therefore Roy expected that if the ordinary members of the Congress could be made politically conscious and the primary Congress Committees politically active and assertive, a new leadership might naturally grow from below. He therefore suggested various measures, constitutional as well as educational, to activise and democratise the primary Congress Committees<sup>88</sup>

Secondly, Roy started in India a Renaissance Movement—a movement for a philosophical revolution—in order to lay the

85. *Ibid.*, (January 1, 1939), p. 13. The quotation is from the Presidential address of Roy at the Bijnore District Political Conference held on 16 December, 1938.

86. OP, p. 142, p. XXIV, (appendix II).

87. *Independent India*, III, (January 29, 1939), p. 76.

88 See M. N. Roy, *On the Congress Constitution*.

intellectual foundation of the alternative leadership. He discovered, as we have already mentioned, the real strength of Gandhism in the religious outlook of the people and concluded that without a change in the religious mentality of the people Gandhism could not be successfully combatted. Therefore, he started an intellectual movement with a view to replace the religious outlook of the people by the scientific mode of thought.

Roy compared the conditions of India with the crisis that overtook Europe towards the close of the Middle Age. The European people, he pointed out, overcame the crisis and made rapid progress owing to the Renaissance which placed before them new ideas and ideals. But in India such a revolution had not taken place, and that was, in his opinion, "the cause for all our national miseries and political humiliation during the last seven or eight hundred years."<sup>89</sup> A Renaissance must precede, in his opinion, the political independence and social progress also of India.

In order to promote a Renaissance Movement, Roy began to examine the cultural heritage of India and developed certain ideas which must be briefly mentioned here. The intellectual atmosphere of nationalist India, Roy found, was dominated by the anti-Western revivalist outlook which was "a positive danger,"<sup>90</sup> though psychologically natural. It was dangerous because by galvanising the religious mode of thought it stood in the way of the much-needed philosophical revolution. But it was natural because, in the words of Roy, it was the expression of a "historically determined inferiority complex."<sup>91</sup> The faith in her spiritual superiority gave the Indians some consolation in the midst of despair and defeat. To combat this attitude of Indian nationalism would be the main task of the Renaissance Movement sponsored by Roy. He maintained that the very notion of the East as the centre of spiritualism and the West of Materialism was a fictitious one and pointed out the essential similarity of the ideas and activities pursued by the people of all countries, East as well as West. It is true, Roy admitted, that the materialist philosophy and rationalist thought have to a large extent developed in modern Europe while in India the predominant outlook remained religious. This religious outlook instead of being an expression of the 'special genius' of Indian

89. M. N. Roy, *Indian Renaissance Movement*, p. 28.

90. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

91. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

culture shows, according to him, only her backwardness. The religious mode of thought, Roy pointed out, "characterises human ideology everywhere in a certain stage of social evolution," but Europe had moved largely beyond that stage but India lagged behind. Hence, the difference.<sup>92</sup>

By analysing the past culture of India Roy showed that it contains a rich heritage of rationalist and materialist tradition from which the Indian Renaissance Movement should draw its inspiration. He referred to the rationalist and materialist thoughts scattered in the Aupanishadik literature, Vaisheshik philosophy of Kanada, Sankhya system of Kapila, in the philosophical thoughts of Gautama, Charvak and the Jains.<sup>93</sup> The materialist trend of thought in ancient India reached its culmination, according to Roy, in the rise of Buddhism which, he said, was "one of the greatest revolutions of history."<sup>94</sup> It was a revolt against the social domination of the priestly class and it threatened religion itself by expressing doubts about the existence of Gods. But this revolution was defeated in India, and Sankaracharya, according to Roy, was "the ideologist of the counter-revolution which was the blackest chapter and the greatest misfortune of Indian history."<sup>95</sup> The subsequent misfortune of India was traced by Roy to the defeat of the Buddhist revolution. After the fall of Buddhism the Indian people were placed under the tyranny of Brahmanical reaction and the lower classes were so much oppressed in Hindu society that when Islam entered India they found in it their liberation, and, therefore, many of them embraced it. That alone, Roy said, can explain the success of Islam in India. Similarly the British conquest of India was also made possible by the cooperation of a section of the Indians themselves.<sup>96</sup> Thus the age-long social stagnation and centuries of political slavery were the price that the Indian people had to pay for the defeat of the Buddhist revolution. With the defeat of Buddhism the rationalist tradition of Indian thought came to an end,<sup>97</sup> and then began the

92. M, p. 8. Similar ideas were expressed in India by Prof. Benoy Kumar Sarkar who was not a Marxist. See Haridas Mukherjee, *Benoy Kumar Sarkar*, pp. 38-53.

93. M, pp. 124-156.

94. SP, p. 274.

95. *Ibid.*, p. 292.

96. *Ibid.*, pp. 293-94.

97. M. N. Roy, *Indian Renaissance Movement*, p. 31.

'dark age' in Indian history. India, wedded to the religious mode of thought, still lingers in the twilight of the mediaeval dark age and the Renaissance Movement was conceived by Roy to bring this period to a close and usher in the modern age. By pointing out the materialist and rationalist heritage of Indian culture, he tried to expose the fallacious belief that materialism is Western and alien to Indian culture and thus sought to remove the inferiority complex of Indian nationalism. He believed that India must accept materialism, which is neither Eastern nor Western but the most developed form of human thought, in order to ensure her social, political and economic progress. Materialist thought to which India also had contributed in the past has at present reached its culmination in the West and therefore India must have the courage to accept it with a clean conscience. He wrote : "India must receive the message of deliverance from the West. It is the message of materialist philosophy. Materialist philosophy is the spiritual message of the West. India must equip herself with this weapon to free it from the dead grip of tradition and to strike out a path for future progress. Western civilization is the collective creation of the entire humanity. It is the highest product of man's creative power. The positive outcome of the history of the various races, nations etc. have gone into its making. It is the common heritage of mankind. The future must be built upon this foundation."<sup>97a</sup>

The Renaissance Movement added a new dimension to the political activities of Roy. He was able to influence the Indian intelligentsia more by his philosophical than by purely political activities. His materialist and critical approach, his stimulating insights and bold assertions earned for him the admiration of many. But his lingering faith in Marxism, his contempt for spiritual (religious) culture and his attempt to discover a class interest behind all the Indian philosophical systems made it difficult for Roy to appreciate the true spirit of Indian culture. According to his analysis the ideal of self-control, embodied in the Hindu Dharma, stands only for "the spoliation and exploitation of the masses".<sup>98</sup> The doctrines of 'spiritualist' philosophy (such as the Law of Karma) were, in his words, expounded by the Rishis of the old with the object of making the masses feel themselves responsible for their misery and thus to safeguard

97a. *Jail Volumes, IV*, p. 129(a).

98. *IM*, p. 144.



the established social order against the danger of a threatening popular revolt.<sup>99</sup>

The spiritualist culture which flourished in India after Buddhism was considered by him as "an instrument of reaction, a bulwark against higher civilization."<sup>100</sup> Condemning Indian culture in unqualified terms he stated : "Spiritualism is the hallucination of the baffled soul; or a check upon the spiritual liberation. Renunciation is a device to satisfy the greed of the upper classes, an instrument to exploit the mentally enslaved, deluded, hypnotized masses."<sup>101</sup> Though still professing his faith in Marxism, Roy conceived the Renaissance Movement with the spirit of the Enlightenment. But both in conception as well as largely in content the movement was un-Marxist. For the ideal of a philosophical revolution independent of and preceding the economic transformation goes against the essential spirit of Marxist historiology. Convinced of the rational foundation of Marxism, Roy by this movement tried to create a rational, critical and non-conformist outlook among the people instead of converting them directly to the new ideology. The Renaissance Movement launched under the banner of reason developed its own dynamism and started a process of intellectual exploration which proved fatal to Marxism itself. The movement which was directed against Gandhism ultimately ended in liquidating Roy's Marxism. From the conception of the Renaissance movement to the birth of New Humanism the process was direct and continuous, aided by experience.

99. SS, p. 110.

100. IM, pp. 242-243.

101. *J. il Volumes*, IV, p. 129(b).

## ROY AND INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

Roy was a keen student of international politics and his political ideas were largely influenced by the developments of European diplomacy. While discussing the evolution of his political philosophy we must refer to his analysis of and reaction to the major developments in contemporary European politics.

The inter-war period was characterised by Roy as a period of a conflict between Socialism and Capitalism. All capitalist powers, Fascist as well as the so-called democratic, were, according to him, united among themselves for a war against the Soviet Union. His analysis of international relations during this period was based upon two assumptions. First, there was no difference between Fascism and Western Democracy, and secondly, the age of national war was over and the history was drifting towards a period of international civil war—a war between revolution and reaction whose battles would be fought in every country (except Russia where Revolution had already triumphed). These assumptions were considered by Roy as based upon the fundamental principles of Marxism; but European history particularly during the period of the second-world-war refused to unfold itself according to this neat pattern. This led Roy to change his views frequently and after various attempts to interpret the drama of world politics by the Marxist formula he ultimately had to give up Marxism itself. We shall discuss, in brief, that fascinating story of a staunch Marxist changing his views under the impact of the march of events.

Western Democracy and Fascism were considered by Roy as manifestations of the same phenomenon in two different periods of history. Like an orthodox Marxist he believed that Parliamentary Democracy was the political expression of capitalism in its period of prosperity and Fascism was the expression of the same economic system in its period of decline. He described Fascism as "the administration of the capitalist society in the period of decay."<sup>1</sup> Describing Fascism and Western Democracy as the twins of capitalism Roy wrote : "The creator of parliamentary democracy was also the promoter of Fascism in a later period of history. Fascism was created to replace

parliamentary democracy when this no longer served the purpose of the creator. The creator was Capitalism.”<sup>2</sup> He described the process of the transformation of Parliamentary democracy to Fascism thus : “The relative freedom granted by the parliamentary regime enables the working class to organise and otherwise prepare itself for the struggle to overthrow capitalism and establish socialism. Therefore the abolition of their own achievements became necessary for the bourgeoisie in the struggle for defending their power and privileges. The Fascist movement is created to do that dirty job for capitalism.”<sup>3</sup> From this view of the origin of Fascism, Roy concluded that there was no basic antagonism between Parliamentary Democracy and Fascism.<sup>3a</sup> Roy’s Marxist analysis of the origin of Fascism was strengthened by the policy adopted by the Western powers towards it. The attitude of the West towards Fascism, particularly the ‘Appeasement’ Policy, could very easily be fitted into this analysis.

In spite of the national sentiment which it embodied, Fascism, Roy pointed out, was, like Communism, an international force. Fascism had the support of the capitalists of all countries as a bulwark against the rising tide of Bolshevism. He wrote : “An outburst of jingoist nationalism Fascism nevertheless is an international phenomenon. It operates on an international scale; it has created an international organisation. No single country in Europe today, with the sole exception of the Soviet Union, is free from the tentacles of this octopus. Everywhere the famous ‘fifth column’ is preparing the ground for the triumph of fascism.”<sup>4</sup> The world forces, Roy analysed, were going to be polarised in two opposing camps cutting across national boundaries. In this age of the conflict between Capitalism and Socialism a war between Capitalist states, Roy thought, was not likely to break out. For their very existence the capitalist states would try to reconcile whatever mutual antagonism they might have in order to face the common enemy

2. RR, p. 77.

3. F, p. 89.

3a. Roy actually believed that the democratic countries of the West, including Great Britain, were gradually drifting towards Fascism. He considered the coalition government formed in England under the leadership of Ramsay Macdonald as a ‘milestone’ in the history of the rise of Fascism in England. He condemned it as ‘a quasi-Fascist dictatorship’. *Jail Volumes, III*, p. 162(a).

4. RR, p. 86.

unitedly.<sup>5</sup> In the period of decaying capitalism wars usually prepare the ground for revolutions and therefore, he thought, in this period of history the capitalist states would not deliberately prepare for an armed conflict among themselves. The age of imperialist war was, according to Roy, replaced by an age of international civil war—a war not between several countries but between two systems. “The nature of the future wars”, Roy pointed out, “is indicated by the Spanish experience.”<sup>6</sup>

Both the basic assumptions with which Roy tried to analyse the international relations of the inter-war period were untenable. Parliamentary Democracy represented the tradition of liberalism of which Fascism was the complete negation. Faith in Marxism however led Roy to overlook this fundamental distinction. The second assumption cannot be justified even by orthodox Marxism. The Marxist-Leninist theory believes in contradiction and antagonism among the capitalist countries and not perfect harmony between them. There were undoubtedly many pro-Fascist elements in the Western Democratic countries but these did not justify the generalisation made by Roy. Moreover, the concept of international civil war thoroughly ignored the force of nationalism.

Roy's analysis of European diplomacy in the inter-war period was largely determined by his ideas about the nature of the Russian Revolution and the Russian foreign policy. The Russian Revolution, M. N. Roy maintained, did not belong to the category of proletarian revolution which according to Marx would break out in the highly industrialised countries. It was, in his opinion, a belated bourgeois-democratic revolution—a ‘mixed type’ of revolution in which the features of the bourgeois revolution and the proletarian revolution were combined.<sup>7</sup> The revolution stood for the peasant ownership of the land which was a feature of the bourgeois-democratic revolution though the bourgeoisie themselves had played no role in it. It was brought about by an alliance of two revolutionary classes—the peasants and the workers—and, therefore, Roy concluded, it could not establish the dictatorship of one class only. The Communist Party was leading two revolutionary classes and therefore “the leadership of the Communist Party”, he wrote, “was not the

5. IW, p. 20.

6. RR, p. 50.

7. *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

dictatorship of the proletariat”<sup>8</sup>. Though the Russian Revolution took place under the leadership of the working class, the social character of the revolution was not changed by it. The Soviet State in spite of the formal title of proletarian dictatorship, virtually represented, according to Roy, the establishment of a new type of democracy, in which political power was actually exercised by the great majority of the population.

Though the social content of the Russian Revolution was largely bourgeois-democratic, Roy emphasised that it was nevertheless different from the classical bourgeois-democratic revolution. This revolution did not place the bourgeoisie in power and under this revolution modern industries were built “an an integral part of socialist construction”<sup>9</sup>. Socialism could not be established in Russia immediately after the revolution since its essential pre-conditions, large scale industrialisation and the corresponding growth of the working class, were still absent. Nor could the Russian Revolution lead to the establishment of a pure capitalist society because the classes in power were opposed to it. Therefore, Roy concluded that a new type of economy was bound to develop in Russia. The Russian society, largely agrarian in character, would peacefully enter into the socialist phase since it did not place the bourgeoisie in power. From his analysis of the character of the Russian Revolution Roy drew the lesson that “the establishment of the proletarian dictatorship is not an indispensable condition for the construction of socialism”<sup>10</sup>.

Roy’s analysis of the nature of the Soviet State was extremely misleading. The concept of the ‘Soviet’ might have great democratic significance and the rule of the workers and peasants organised in the Soviets might have given the Marxist concept of ‘dictatorship of proletariat’ (interpreted as the dictatorship of the proletariat and peasant) a democratic connotation. But in Russia the Marxist concept of proletarian dictatorship took the form of the dictatorship of the Communist Party which eclipsed the Soviets as well as the proletariat and the peasants. It appears incredible that this feature of the Russian State escaped the notice of Roy. There was no reason for him to indulge in false propaganda in favour of Russia even after his expulsion from the Communist International. Was he blinded by mental pre-dispositions and preconceived notions? The only other expla-

8. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 30.

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 28-29.

nation appears to be that the dictatorial features of the Russian state were considered by him as temporary phenomena which would melt away gradually as conditions became more favourable. As early as 1937 Roy wrote about the stifling atmosphere in the Russian Communist Party brought about by the utter absence of free discussion<sup>11</sup>. When he found that even after the victory in the second World War, these features of Soviet Society persisted, he regarded them as the part and parcel of the system itself and therefore raised his voice against them.

Immediately after the Bolsheviks came to power in Russia they expected similar revolutions to break out in other countries of Europe. This expectation was however soon belied and the subsequent development of the foreign policy of the Soviet Union, Roy pointed out, was determined by this fact. Russian foreign policy, Roy said, was aiming at removing the causes of the failure. According to the Marxist theory there was no reason why those revolutionary outbreaks should fail, because all the conditions of capitalist decay and disorganisation were more or less present. Still the revolution failed mainly because of one factor—the military power of the bourgeois states<sup>12</sup>. After the perspective of the world revolution disappeared, Russian foreign policy was determined, Roy pointed out, by this lesson. Soviet Russia tried to build up a strong military power not only for the purpose of defence but also “to come to the aid of the revolutionary forces in other countries”<sup>13</sup>. He predicted that the next phase of Russian foreign policy would be Red Napoleonism—the Russian army coming to the help of the revolutionary forces in other countries. Describing the strategy of Red Napoleonism, Roy wrote : “The proletariat is an international force. Therefore, it is not prescribed that the working class of one particular country must accomplish the revolutionary task in that country. It is quite conceivable that the process will take place on a really international scale, not according to the schematic idea of a simultaneous world revolution but the proletariat victorious in one country and having acquired sufficient strength in consequence of that victory, carrying the revolution to other countries where difficulties of the local conditions may prevent the native working class performing the task by itself”<sup>14</sup>. Roy believed that Russia

11. *Ibid.*, p. 60.

12. *IW*, p. 23.

13. *RR*, p. 54.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

must ultimately take the offensive in order to play the role of Red Napoleonism successfully. With the aim of destroying the base of the world revolution the reactionary powers were preparing for a war against the Soviet Union, and, therefore Roy thought that it would be stupid for Russia to wait indefinitely for the enemy to start the war. Russia, therefore, in the fulness of time, must take the offensive and start the war which would be a war to spread revolution—Red Napoleonism in operation. But before full military preparations were made Russia must avoid a war by all means and such a cautious Russian policy in consideration of self-defence must not be, Roy warned, confused with nationalism. He explained that after the triumph of Nazism in Germany any revolutionary offensive was out of question and therefore the working class must be on the defensive. On this ground he supported the Franco-Soviet alliance (1935) and welcomed it as a countermove against the victory of Fascism in Germany. The alliance between Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia in August 1939 was justified by Roy on the ground of political expediency. It was a defensive measure on the part of the Soviet Union. The failure of the Moscow negotiations with the Western countries made Russia isolated and the imminent German invasion of Poland created for her a ticklish problem. Russia, Roy explained, was confronted with the danger of the victorious German army appearing on her frontier though she was not yet in a position to take the risk of a war. Therefore, motivated by the instinct of self-preservation, Russia made the alliance with Germany solely with the purpose of ensuring the safety of her state. Moreover, by concluding this pact Russia brought about a war between Germany and the Western Powers. Without this dramatic Russian move on the chessboard of European diplomacy, Britain might have submitted once again to the Nazi demand. The Russo-German Pact, in Roy's words, was "an undeniably opportunist though forced diplomatic move"<sup>15</sup> on the part of Russia. The pact had no ideological foundation and it did not imply any real alliance between Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany. They continued to remain the mortal enemies and the final showdown between them was inevitable. After the conclusion of the Russo-German Pact Russian foreign policy entered into a new phase and took more and more an aggressive character. Her policy in Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, Esthonia and Finland led her critics to characterise it as 'Red Imperialism.'

15. *Ibid.*, p. 131.

Roy in those days played the role of an orthodox supporter of Russia. He pointed out that Russia being a socialist country could not develop imperialist tendencies which follow necessarily from capitalism. Roy interpreted the new turn in Russian policy as the stage of 'Red Napoleonism.' "What was condemned as 'Red Imperialism'," he wrote, "was the appearance of Red Napoleonism—the characteristic feature of the politics of our time."<sup>16</sup> Roy justified the Russian policy of aggression in Poland, Finland and other Baltic states on two grounds—its aim was to strengthen the defence of Russia against the coming inevitable conflict with Nazi Germany, and secondly, it promoted social revolution in those countries.<sup>16a</sup> Roy's whole judgment was based upon two assumptions: first, Soviet Russia represented the cause of the historically necessary revolution and, therefore, the expansion of Russian influence meant the triumph of revolution, and, secondly, whatever was done for the cause of revolution (that is, in the interest of Russia) was justifiable even if it implied a repudiation of the traditionally accepted standards and values of international relations.

Roy's analysis of the Russian foreign policy and his concept of Red Napoleonism appear to be unrealistic and illusory. Immediately after the conquest of power, the Bolshevik leaders of Russia tried to follow a revolutionary diplomacy aiming at World Revolution. But the failure of World Revolution and acceptance of the ideal of Socialism in one country forced Soviet Russia to revert to the traditional form of diplomacy. National interest—her security and economic development—became the primary objective of Russian foreign policy and ideological considerations played only a secondary role in it. The interest of communism was identified with the interest of Russia and the assumption that the Red Army was created to spread revolution in different parts of the world was only a figment of the imagination. The wrong analysis of the Russian foreign policy led Roy to support uncritically all the diplomatic and military moves of Russia.

The outbreak of the war between the Western Powers and

16. *Ibid.*, p. 141.

16a. Referring to the Russo-Finnish War Dallin says that the Soviet strategy was based on two considerations: the inevitability of her becoming involved in the war and her complete isolation in the event of a conflict. David J. Dallin, *Soviet Russia's Foreign Policy, 1939-1942*, p. 126.



Germany in 1939 came to Roy as a surprise. It could not be fitted into his general scheme of the international civil war. He expected a war between the Soviet Union assisted by the socialist forces all over the world on the one side, and the Fascist and the Western democratic powers on the other. But Nazi Germany made an alliance with Soviet Russia and war was declared by Britain and France against Germany. Until the outbreak of the war Roy's Marxist analysis could supply a plausible interpretation of the diplomatic history of Europe but the outbreak of the war and the way in which it developed were bewildering to him. During the war and the immediate post-war period Roy had to grapple with many unexpected facts and developments. He tried to explain them by his Marxian theory as far as possible, but when he found it impossible, he had to change, as we have already mentioned, the theory itself.

When the war broke out, Roy, as we have just mentioned, found it very difficult to explain it. It was not, he said, a war between Democracy and Fascism. England and France were capitalist countries and Fascism, he argued, was a weapon created by the capitalists themselves for their own defence. In its period of decay, capitalism, Roy said, was bound to take the form of Fascism, and, therefore, it was not possible for England and France to start a war against Fascism.<sup>17</sup> Nor did he consider it as an imperialist war. An imperialist war, he pointed out, breaks out as the culmination of a long period of rivalry between two imperialist powers or two groups of such powers. Such was the diplomatic background of the First World War. A severe tension developed between two blocs of imperialist powers over a long period of time and the accident at Serajevo simply supplied the spark that set Europe ablaze. "But the sudden events in Poland," Roy pointed out, "upon which the present war broke out cannot be fitted into the scheme of appeasement which was the fundamental feature of European politics ever since 1924. The plan in this case was to avoid war at all cost."<sup>18</sup> Since the outbreak of the war did not follow from the logic of European politics as analysed by Roy, he concluded that it broke out as an accident. If the problem of Poland were handled wisely and patiently by Germany, it would have been solved, Roy believed, by another Munich. The im-

17. *IW*, p. 23.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 110.

patient militarism of Germany and consideration of prestige on the part of England and France "provoked the armed conflict which nobody wanted."<sup>19</sup>

Roy held out two alternative perspectives about the future development of the war. Since the war broke out accidentally, 'unwanted' by both the parties, it was natural for them to wage it half-heartedly always striving for an early settlement. But the perspective of the war continuing was not altogether excluded by Roy and he expected profound revolutionary consequences to follow from that eventuality. "If it continues", he wrote, "its results most probably will not be the strengthening of some imperialist powers at the cost of others but the mutual destruction, seriously weakening at any rate, of all the capitalist states involved. And that would only further the cause of their common enemy—revolution."<sup>20</sup> An early settlement of the dispute was however considered by Roy as more probable than the development of the conflict into a serious war. That would be more in accordance with his theory of international civil war and his analysis of the war as an accident. The period immediately after the outbreak of war seemed to confirm Roy's analysis that the war was "unwanted" and therefore unreal. The 'phony' phase of the war appeared to indicate that even after the declaration, war might not actually break out. Roy pointed out that the policy of appeasement was continued even after the formal declaration of war. Norway, according to him, was a victim of the appeasement policy.<sup>21</sup> The fall of France itself was interpreted by him as a case of betrayal by her own rulers at the altar of Fascism. The capitalist rulers of France themselves favoured the victory of Fascism and therefore they capitulated without any serious fighting. France, in other words, according to Roy, had fallen not to foreign invaders but was a tragic victim of internal reaction.<sup>22</sup> He believed that behind the camouflage of the war declared in 1939 a real war between revolution and counter-revolution was going on, on an international scale, cutting across national boundaries. In that international

19. *Ibid.*, p. 27. cf. "Moscow, as a matter of fact, even more than Berlin, anticipated a new appeasement move on the part of England and France.....So the Russians were caught completely off guard when England and France declared war on Germany three days after Hitler attacked Poland", David J. Dallin, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

20. *IW*, p. 20.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 83.

22. *RR*, p. 84.

civil war the ruling authorities both of France and Germany belonged to the same camp and therefore they cooperated. Capitulation of France was the expression of that cooperation.

Even after the fall of France when England continued the war with firm resolution it occurred to Roy that the war had developed into a serious crusade against Fascism and therefore he decided to support it. He thought that the democratic and progressive elements in England must have forced their government to take a determined stand against Fascism and believed that behind this anti-fascist policy of the British Government the contribution of the British Labour Party must be considerable.<sup>23</sup> With the rise of the democratic progressive forces in England, the foundation of imperialism, he believed, would be weakened and thereby the cause of Indian independence would be promoted. Therefore, in August 1940 he wrote: "I am decidedly of opinion that the road to Indian Freedom lies through an active participation in the struggle against Fascism."<sup>24</sup> Roy was confident that the war against Fascism would inevitably lead to the collapse of capitalism and imperialism as well. Whatever might be the attitude of the British Government towards India, she must not, Roy thought, remain indifferent to this war because no single country can remain free in a world enslaved by Fascism. And the liberating effects of the victory of the anti-fascist camp would also be felt in all countries irrespective of the attitude of the Government.<sup>25</sup> Roy supported the cause

23. WR, p. 3.

24. IW, p. 178.

25. This attitude of Roy towards the war brought about a complete rupture between him and the Indian National Congress. He founded in 1939 a group within the Congress known as the League of Radical Congressmen and in 1940 he severed all relations with the Congress and founded the Radical Democratic Party. The policy of the Congress towards the war was determined by nationalist consideration and in spite of its sympathy for the victims of Fascism and its appreciation of the 'human cultural and social values' represented by the Soviet Union, (See N. V. Rajkumar, ed. *The Background of India's Foreign Policy*, p. 85) the Congress refused to cooperate with the British Government in the war unless it agreed to grant independence to India first. This attitude of the Congress was interpreted by Roy as a clear evidence of its Fascist character. He opposed the 'Quit India' movement started by the Congress against the British rule in August 1942. Roy further maintained that as a result of the war the economic foundation of British Imperialism would be destroyed and power would consequently be transferred to India. He was opposed to the transference of power to the Indian National Congress on the ground that it would lead to the

of the Allies before Russia was invaded by Nazi Germany but he was confident that Russia would ultimately take part in the war against Fascism. Before Nazi Germany invaded Russia he wrote : "The external danger to the Soviet Union was mainly represented by Nazi Germany. With the domination of the whole of Europe, the Fascists were sure to turn upon the base of revolution, as soon as they had settled with England in one way or other. Therefore, there could not be any mistake in the Soviet policy towards Nazi Germany and its allies."<sup>26</sup> The Nazi invasion of Russia in June 1941 was in a sense a vindication of his own analysis of international politics but the whole-hearted cooperation promised to Russia by the British Prime Minister Winston Churchill was "entirely incredible" to him.<sup>27</sup> He still suspected that the conservative forces of Britain like those of France were not serious in the war against Fascism and the alliance which they formed with Bolshevik Russia to fight the Fascist forces came to him as an agreeable surprise. The Anglo-Soviet Alliance for twenty years concluded after the Nazi invasion of Russia was regarded by Roy as the most outstanding landmark of contemporary history.<sup>28</sup> He could not explain this alliance by his general assumption of the international civil war. Why should capitalist democracy form an alliance with Russian

rise of Fascism in the country. In the place of the National Government which he believed would be controlled by upper classes, he demanded the Peoples' Government where the majority of the people would be able to exercise effective political power. During the war he organised the Indian Federation of Labour which was assisted by the British Government with Rs. 13,000 per month in order to carry on propaganda in favour of the war. By going directly against the Indian national movement Roy made himself completely isolated in the political life of the country. Subsequent events however proved that his analysis of the Congress was wrong. Under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru, condemned by Roy as a prophet of Indian Fascism (see his book : *Jawaharlal Nehru*), India accepted democracy and socialism as her ideals. For Roy's ideas on Indian politics during this period see his books : *Freedom or Fascism ?*, *Nationalism, an antiquated cult*, *Indian Labour and Post-war Reconstruction*, *Nationalism, Democracy and Freedom*, *Poverty or Plenty*, *Planning a New India*, *Alphabet of Fascist Economics*, *National Government or Peoples' Government ?*, *Last Battles of Freedom*, *Problem of Freedom*, *Jawaharlal Nehru*, *INA and August Revolution* and *People's Plan*, prepared by B. N. Banerjee, G. D. Parikh and V. M. Tarkunde.

26. RR, p. 134.

27. CI., p. 16.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

Bolshevism to fight Fascism? He believed that there must exist some factor—possibly other than economic—which made the British Government determined to fight Fascism even with the cooperation of Bolshevik Russia. This factor he discovered in man's loyalty to cultural values and this experience dealt a severe shock to Roy's faith in Marxism.

Trying to find out the theoretical basis of the Anglo-Russian cooperation against Fascism, Roy wrote: "Fascism had appeared on the scene as the avowed enemy, not only of the working class, but of modern political institutions and cultural values."<sup>29</sup> "Triumphant Fascism" he further explained, "forced a new alignment of forces, an alliance of all desirous of defending modern civilization. The working class belonged to that alliance", but "the new alliance embraced many social elements and political organisations which had previously been regarded as antagonistic to the liberation of the working class."<sup>30</sup> Therefore, not only the working class but all persons holding loyalty to the modern political institutions and cultural values would constitute the anti-Fascist camp. The dissolution of the Communist International by Russia was, according to Roy, the logical outcome of the new alignment of forces. The working class was not alone in the fight against Fascism, and, therefore, Roy argued, a working class organisation like the Communist International was no longer necessary. The alliance of the working class with other democratic forces in the fight against Fascism would necessarily lead to the substitution of the proletarian dictatorship by a democratic alliance of all progressive forces, including non-proletarian and non-communist elements. In the post-war Europe, revolution, Roy maintained, would no longer be identified with communism. He had already come to the conclusion that besides the working class there were many other forces fighting for the revolution. Instead of an orthodox working class movement following the pattern of the Russian revolution, the revolutionary movement in future would therefore be more broad-based, and Russia, Roy confidently believed, was already reconciled to that perspective. The dissolution of the Communist International was a clear indication to Roy of the changed Russian attitude.

Out of the ashes of the Second World War he expected the emergence of a new revolutionary Europe under the guidance

29. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

of the Russian Communists and the British Labour Party. He had absolutely no doubt that Britain under the Labour Party and Soviet Russia would come very close to each other. The only major point of difference between the British Labour Party and the Russian Communists was the question of proletarian dictatorship but Roy was confident that the Russians have quietly abandoned the bone of contention. "The Russians", Roy thought, "have learned that the alternative to the ineffective formal democracy is not dictatorship, but a restatement of the concept of democracy, attaching more importance to practice than to mere profession."<sup>31</sup> Since the British Labour Party was committed to a socialist programme, its foreign policy, Roy believed, was bound to harmonise with that of the Soviet Union and the future politics of Europe would thus, in his analysis, be determined by the Anglo-Soviet Alliance.<sup>32</sup> Like an orthodox Marxist Roy assumed that the U.S.A. would be the greatest champion of world reaction in the post-war period.<sup>33</sup> He anticipated the polarisation of world forces into two camps—one led by the U.S.A. and the other by the U.S.S.R., the former representing the forces of world reaction and the latter of revolution. The U.S.A., Roy pointed out, was the only country that emerged out of the second World War with its basis of capitalism almost unchallenged. "It was", he said, "all along evident that American could try to restore in Europe the capitalist status quo ante bellum."<sup>34</sup> But the U.S. attempt to restore capitalism in Europe, he believed, had no chance of success owing to the rise of the strong democratic forces in alliance with the Soviet Union. In any future conflict the U.S.A., Roy feared, would find her allies mainly in Asia. He considered the important nationalist leaders of South East Asia such as Aung San of Burma or Dr. Soekarno of Java as sympathisers of Fascism.<sup>35</sup> Their policy towards Japan during the war determined Roy's attitude towards them. He seems to have ignored the fact that their pro-Japanese attitude was determined more by

31. RR, p. 260.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 323.

33. *Ibid.*, pp. 269-70. Roy assumed that the U.S.A. in spite of the participation in the war against the Fascist powers was in sympathy with Fascism, but he never explained at this stage why the U.S.A. took part in the war against Fascism at all.

34. RR, p. 281.

35. INAAR, p. 33.

national than by ideological considerations. He pointed out that during the short period of occupation the Japanese had sown the seeds of Fascism in the occupied countries and the nationalist organisations of Burma, Indo-China and Indonesia were influenced by the Japanese propaganda. This analysis led Roy to conclude that Asia was becoming the home of Neo-Fascism and America, he believed, was encouraging this ominous development. Roy was convinced of the Fascist character of the Indian National Congress and thought that India would be the base of the next war against the U.S.S.R.<sup>36</sup>

The U.S.A.-U.S.S.R. antagonism was interpreted by Roy as a new phase of the old conflict between revolution and counter-revolution. The forces, he said, were polarised in these two camps on the basis of ideas and ideals cutting across the national boundaries. It was a continuation of the international civil war—a conflict between two ideals representing two different worlds. This conflict may lead to another war which, in the analysis of Roy, “will coincide with the final stage of the international civil war of our time.”<sup>37</sup> He still believed that capitalism in the present age would inevitably give rise to Fascism and therefore democracy to be real must outgrow the limitations of the capitalist economy and become Social Democracy. The future conflict between the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R., Roy hoped, would be a conflict between the old fashioned formal democracy and genuine Social Democracy. “The pre-war ideological conflict between capitalism and socialism”, he wrote, “will become a conflict between a conventional attachment to formal democracy and the necessity for bold democratic practice.”<sup>38</sup> He had no doubt that Russia had already become a great champion of the ‘bold democratic practice.’

One fatal error in Roy’s analysis of the world political situation was his undue emphasis on the ideological factor. International relations are determined by various forces in which nationalism and considerations of Balance of Power play the most significant roles. Instead of considering the Anglo-Russian alliance as a product of the exigencies of the war, Roy tried to interpret it as an expression of ideological affinity and this led him to imagine a profound change in the nature of the Russian Communism. The dissolution of the Communist International

36. *Ibid.*, p. 104.

37. *RR.* p. 256.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 260.

which was essentially a strategic move on the part of Russia dictated by war considerations, appeared to Roy as the liquidation of the proletarian character of communism or rather communism itself. Roy, therefore, concluded that in the post-war period Russia would champion the cause of democracy and give up communism and proletarian dictatorship. But when Russia refused to oblige Roy's expectations based upon a false analysis of international relations, for the first time he became critical of Russia. And this critical attitude enabled him to form a correct estimate of Russian foreign policy and Russian Communism.

The post-war foreign policy of the Soviet Union was completely at variance with what Roy expected and this started the process of his disillusionment about Soviet Russia and Russian Communism. The Russian attitude towards Persia, Turkey and Greece in the immediate post-war period led him to conclude that her policy was determined no longer by any ideological or revolutionary considerations. He discussed the Russian foreign policy of the post-war period in detail and concluded that it was "reminiscent of the days of imperialist expansion",<sup>39</sup> and "can hardly be distinguished from the traditional diplomacy of National States engaged in power politics manoeuvring for a predominating position in the international set up."<sup>40</sup> In this power politics, ideological factors were completely ignored for immediate strategic gain. M. N. Roy always believed, though erroneously, that ideological and revolutionary considerations were the basic motivation of Russian foreign policy and he tried to justify Russia on that score. But the shape of the Russian foreign policy in the post-war period at last disillusioned him, and he observed: "Our grievance is that the revolutionary side in this conflict should have allowed ideological considerations to be overwhelmed by other considerations . . . . Our objection to this doubtful "realism" is that it is prejudicing the cause of revolution."<sup>41</sup> Deprived of any ideological sheet anchor Russian foreign policy was determined by pragmatic considerations of her own interest. Communism, in other words, was identified with the interest of Russia and Russian nationalism became equated with communism. Old nationalist power politics thus

39. NO, p. 108.

40. RR, p. 379.

41. NO, p. 94.



assumed an ideological orientation but it had no idealism apart from the pursuit of Soviet Russia's own national interest. Russia's primary concern was, in the words of Roy, "not to spread communism but to extend the influence of the Soviet State,"<sup>42</sup> and as a result the Communist Parties abroad became so many instruments of the foreign policy of the Soviet National State.

The Russian attitude towards the Labour Government in Britain came to Roy as a great surprise. He was confident that the Anglo-Russian cooperation would be the basis of the socialist reconstruction of the post-war Europe but he found that the Russians instead of embracing the British Labour Party as a socialist ally adopted an attitude of intense hostility towards them. The old conflict between the Communist and the Social Democrats reappeared in all its bitterness. Roy condemned this policy of Russia as "incredibly foolish."<sup>43</sup> He now understood that his analysis of Soviet Communism was entirely wrong. The Russian Communists still believed in the cult of Communist dictatorship and were not reconciled to a democratic perspective of social development. He wrote : "They (The Russians) could not adjust their behaviour to the new atmosphere in which they were to operate after the collapse of the fascist military might. They disregarded the fact that the peoples of Western Europe have a tradition of democracy, which was the issue of the war as far as they were concerned. They failed to realise that to triumph in Western Europe the revolution must reconcile itself with that tradition, which itself was the legacy of an earlier revolution. They would not trust anyone but their henchmen, who call themselves Communists, who had discredited themselves by their behaviour in the earlier stages of the war, and who are advocates of the idea of dictatorship, so very repugnant to the democratic tradition of Western Europe. The greatest mistake of the Russians was their failure to imagine that the revolution which actually held Europe in its grip could have different patterns, and might even open up the vista of a future not according to their preconceived notions."<sup>44</sup> Russia lost her leadership of the post-war revolutionary forces of Western Europe because of her insistence on promoting revolution every-

42. *Ibid.*, p. 129.

43. *RR*, p. 364.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 349.

where on the Russian model without making any concession to the democratic tradition.

The conflict between Britain and Russia was, according to Roy, a conflict between dictatorial Communism and a resurgent idea of democracy. Democratic Socialism found a leadership in the Labour Party and "the struggle for the soul of liberated Europe sharpened in the form of Anglo-Soviet diplomatic discord".<sup>45</sup> Between these two alternatives the choice of Roy was very clear. He asserted: "We must fix our eyes on that rising star (The British Labour Party), because Communism no longer offers any hope".<sup>46</sup> In the conditions of post-war Europe, Roy pointed out, the necessity for a revolution is felt by the majority of the population and therefore an insurrection and a revolutionary dictatorship by the minority was no longer necessary. Democratic socialism embodied the tradition of Liberalism and "to say....that we can fight Fascism by rejecting the tradition of Liberalism, means", Roy said, "that in order to fight Fascism we must adopt fascist methods. The Communists are acting precisely in that manner".<sup>47</sup>

The post-war foreign policy of Russia thus was a great disappointment for Roy. How could a socialist country committed to a programme of human liberation follow such a policy? This was the question before him. This disappointing foreign policy led him to turn his attention to the internal conditions of Russia, because, as he said, "the foreign policy of a country is necessarily determined to a very large extent by its internal structural and functional conditions".<sup>48</sup> A re-examination of the internal conditions of Russia with a critical outlook made his disillusionment about Russia complete.

Roy expected that after the victory in the war the rigours of the Communist dictatorship in Russia would diminish and she would develop more liberal tendencies. This expectation was thoroughly belied. The policy of imposing the 'Iron Curtain', he pointed out, might be justified on the plea of war emergencies but in the absence of any foreign danger the Russians, he argued, could well afford to be more liberal. If the Russians were actually proceeding with socialist reconstruction in countries occupied by the Red Army why should they

45. NO, p. 139.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 126.

47. *Ibid.*, p. 141.

48. RR, p. 378.

not throw the doors open to all? Russian policy led Roy to conclude that it was difficult to take it for granted that some kind of paradise was being created in the countries occupied by the Red Army. He referred to the defeat of the communists in Austria, Hungary and Bulgaria which, he said, was an indication of the unfavourable reaction of the people to the Russian occupation.<sup>49</sup> In all the countries in the Soviet Zone behind the facade of coalition governments 'covert dictatorships' of the Communists had been established with the backing of the Red Army.<sup>50</sup> This was the condition of the countries occupied by the Red Army. What was the picture of Russia herself? "Has the ideal turned out as expected? Has it yielded the promised results?", asked Roy.<sup>51</sup> He confessed that his consistent support for Russia was based upon two assumptions—first, socialism was being built there, and secondly, socialism would make men free. Experience created doubts in Roy's minds about the validity of these assumptions. Communism might still be regarded as a distant ideal but the question before Roy was—"Are the conditions of life in the Soviet Union moving towards that direction?"<sup>52</sup> The conditions existing in Russia created various doubts in his mind. His whole philosophical conviction was in a melting pot.

Withering away of the state was, according to Marx, a condition for the establishment of socialism but politically the Soviet Union was not approaching that stage. The Communists claimed that the Stalin Constitution made Russia a democracy. According to the Marxist theory the proletarian dictatorship would be followed by the disappearance of the state and if by the Stalin Constitution Russia had ceased to be a dictatorship, the state itself should cease to exist. The Russians claimed to have established a classless society in their country. Roy argued that if they had done so, such a society, following the Marxist formula, must necessarily be stateless. The experience of Russia led him to conclude that "either a classless society has not been established in the Soviet Union, or the Marxist-Leninist theory of State has been repudiated by experience".<sup>53</sup> He contended that the economic life of Russia was equally disappointing.

49. NO, pp. 96-99.

50. RR, pp. 327-328.

51. NO, p. 146.

52. RR, p. 384.

53. *Ibid.*, p. 381.

Democratic control of the economic life through the trade unions and factory committees was replaced by bureaucratic control. In Russia the ideal of economic equality could not be realised and higher wages and special emoluments were offered as incentives for greater productive efforts through such devices as the Stakhanovite system. The practice in Russia seemed to corroborate the view that acquisitiveness is a part of human nature and this view provided the justification of the profit motive. According to Marxism the nature of man would change with changes in the economic mode of production. In Russia the economic mode of production had changed (from private ownership to the state ownership) but human nature remained what it was. Roy wrote : "One generation may be too short a time. But it is long enough to produce a new tendency. That even is absent".<sup>54</sup> The experience of political and economic life of Russia led him to conclude that in Russia "private capitalism has been replaced by State capitalism, which is euphemistically equated with Socialism, and this "Socialism" is very much different from the real thing, communism has been relegated to the distant fairy land of Utopia".<sup>55</sup>

Roy found that rise of nationalism became the most prominent feature of Russian cultural life and this also was greatly annoying to him. Marx had declared that the working class had no country and communism was developed as an international movement but to his utter dismay Roy found that Russian cultural life was powerfully influenced by the cult of nationalism. To the communists Russia became the "Soviet fatherland" and Roy pointed out that "the emphasis was on the 'fatherland', the adjective being only an euphemism".<sup>56</sup> During the war against Nazism the legendary greatness of Russia of the Czars was invoked in order to create popular enthusiasm. Communism could not supply the necessary inspiration and so nationalism was encouraged. The Czarist General Souvarov was celebrated by Russia as the greatest national hero. Roy referred to the dispute between the communists of different countries on their national interests and observed : "Having degenerated into Nationalism, it has ceased to be Communism. It has ceased to be an ideal for people who look beyond national rivalries and

54. *Ibid.*, p. 383.

55. *Ibid.*, p. 382.

56. *Ibid.*, p. 396.

jealousies, towards an order of human brotherhood and commonwealth. Since Communism can no longer provide that ideal, it has ceased to be the banner of revolution".<sup>57</sup>

Russia disappointed Roy completely. What was the metamorphosis of the Russian Revolution due to? Was Stalin or any person responsible for it, as Trotsky maintained, or, was it due to the fallacies of Marxism itself? At first he was inclined to hold Stalin responsible for the degeneration of the Russian Revolution<sup>58</sup> and tried to differentiate Marxism from the practice of Russian Communism.<sup>59</sup> But soon he revised his opinion and made Marxism itself responsible for the developments in Russia. This was a period of critical self-analysis, deep reflection and mental stock-taking for Roy. He now understood that his interpretation of Marxism (which he offered in the second period of his Marxist career) was influenced more by his own views than by what Marx actually wrote. Consequently his analysis of international relations and his expectation about the future role of Russia were all belied. He realised that he had not been true to Marxism while Russia had, in fact, adhered to it and therefore he changed his view on Marxism. As a matter of fact, as we have previously mentioned, Roy had long ceased to be a Marxist but he could not develop his own ideas freely owing to the verbal loyalty to Marxism. When that barrier was at last overcome, he advanced rapidly in the formulation of new ideas and built up a new philosophical system, called Radical Humanism or New Humanism.

The philosophy of New Humanism was born out of the experience of the Second World War. Fascism was a great menace to human civilization and Roy found that while Communism was flirting with Fascism, the liberals fought against it tooth and nail. He observed that "it was not the interest of the world proletariat, as represented by the Communist International, which was identical with the fate of the modern world in the most critical moment of its history. The role was filled in by the much maligned Western democracy, because of its loyalty to human and cultural values".<sup>60</sup> The main source of inspiration that guided the liberals in the anti-Fascist war was,

57. NO, p. 137.

58. RR, pp. 388-96.

59. NO, p. 139.

60. RR, p. 410.

as Roy understood it, their loyalty to human and cultural values. This experience was the foundation of the philosophy of New Humanism. In the making of history human ideas and values proved to be more effective than economic factors and therefore Roy passed from the philosophy of economism to that of Humanism.



## **PART TWO**

**HUMAN NATURE AND ETHICS**

**PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY**

**SOCIAL, POLITICAL & ECONOMIC DOCTRINES**

**NEW HUMANISM AND INTERNATIONAL  
RELATIONS**





Humanism is an old philosophy and Roy qualified his Humanism by the words 'New', 'Radical', 'Scientific', etc., because he claimed that "it is humanism enriched, reinforced and elaborated by scientific knowledge and social experience gained during the centuries of modern civilization".<sup>1</sup> The main study of the humanist philosophy is man. Roy tried to interpret man in the light of scientific knowledge, traced all social progress to his ideas and aspirations and visualised a new social order conducive to the welfare and freedom of the individual. We, therefore, shall discuss human nature, man's role in history, and the new humanism social order as propounded by Roy in three separate chapters. Thereafter we shall briefly refer to Roy's analysis of post-war international politics in the light of his philosophy of New Humanism. Finally we shall complete our dissertation by making some general remarks on M. N. Roy and his philosophy.

1. NH, p. 37.

## HUMAN NATURE AND ETHICS

Every political philosophy, in the last analysis, is based, either explicitly or implicitly, upon a concept of human nature. Some consider man as a divine entity and some take him as a mere physical conglomeration and complex of material forces. Man is regarded by some as a selfish economic being always trying to promote his own interest, and many, on the other hand, consider him as a social animal. Some concede that man is rational, and some consider him as essentially irrational, driven mainly by blind emotional urges. Political thought is a part of social science and, therefore, it must deal with the problem of human nature. This concern with human nature brings political philosophy within the domain of metaphysics. In order to ascertain human nature man must be explained; but man cannot be explained in isolation. An interpretation of man naturally raises the question of the origin of man and thus political philosophy enters into the sphere of metaphysics. Roy, therefore, observed : "Except on the basis of a philosophy embracing the totality of existence, all approaches to the problems of individual as well as social life are bound to be misleading. In other words, a sound social and political philosophy must have a metaphysical foundation".<sup>1</sup>

Roy was a full-blooded materialist. He maintained that life came out of inanimate matter and man is the highest product of the process of organic evolution. He held that experimentally life cannot be proved to be anything but a phenomenon of matter in a specific state of physico-chemical organisation.<sup>2</sup> According to him all the attributes of man including his intelligence and emotion have a physical basis and can be traced back to the lowest form of organic matter.

Roy tried to meet the challenge of the modern "revolution" in science which had blasted the Newtonian outlook dominating the scientific world for nearly two hundred years. The Theory of Relativity, the Quantum Theory, the electrical structure of matter, Heisenberg's principle of Indeterminacy—all these have revolutionized the traditional concepts of science. The philo-

1. RH, p. 12.

2. *The Marxian Way*, II, p. 69.

sophical consequences of the new developments of science are of profound significance. The materiality of matter, the law of causality, the concept of determinism—all have been placed in a melting pot. From these developments some renowned scientists like Eddington and Jeans have come to the conclusion that the ultimate nature of the universe is mental. Scientists like Eddington and Schrodinger think that determinism must be definitely abandoned while another group including Einstein and Max Planck is of opinion that strict causality would ultimately be restored in physics. Roy tried to face the challenge of the new development of science and sought to prove that they ultimately have strengthened rather than blasted the foundation of materialism.<sup>2a</sup> He wrote : “It won’t do simply to dismiss authoritative scientific opinion, and the neo-mysticism claiming its sanction from it as ideological efforts to bolster up the tottering bourgeois social order and its cultural super-structure. That is only avoiding the issue....The more convincing method will be to show that the philosophical consequences of the post-Marxian scientific research can be fitted into the materialist view of nature and life. The fallacies of the Newtonian natural philosophy should be admitted; Materialism should be freed from those fallacies and restated in terms which would harmonise with the latest scientific knowledge about the anatomy and physiology of nature, inanimate as well as living”.<sup>3</sup> With profound scholarship unusual in a political leader Roy tried to establish that in spite of the recent developments of science, the physical reality remains, though the old concept of matter was no longer tenable. The old dichotomy between Materialism and Idealism, he believed, was still valid in the metaphysical field and maintained that “as a negation of Materialism, idealist philosophy is logically associated with a mystic metaphysics of super-naturalism”<sup>4</sup>. The philosophical systems which prefer to take up an intermediate position were condemned by Roy as the ultra-modern scientific scholasticism. In the Jail Volumes we find Roy’s most serious attempt to reconcile materialism with the latest scientific knowledge. In the humanist period he fully subscribed to the ideas elaborated by him in these volumes about the philosophical consequences of modern science, though he

2a. See his book *Science and Philosophy*.

3. *The Marxian Way*, II, p. 80.

4. *RRR*, II, p. 266.

now gave up the assumption of any direct relation between the advocacy of Spiritualism or Idealism with the desire to maintain the present class domination.<sup>5</sup>

Roy was, however, not happy with the term 'Materialism' and preferred the expression "Physical Realism." He candidly admitted that the term 'Materialism' has lost its meaning and makes a wrong impression<sup>6</sup> but he firmly held that the ultimate reality of the universe was a physical substance. He wrote : "...Materialism must be dissociated from certain notions which have been rendered untenable by the latest discoveries of science. Physics has discarded the old conception of matter, but it has not dissolved the physical universe into nothingness or the fantasy of disembodied minds. The world is not made of indivisible atoms—"the hard lumps of reality" of the Newtonian natural philosophy. But at the same time, physics cannot do without the concept of substance—the substratum of the world of experience. The field is not an abstract mathematical construction; it is measurable; therefore, it is a physical entity."<sup>7</sup> Roy therefore concluded that all really scientific objections to Materialism could be overcome if the expression "Physical Realism" was used.

Roy held that in the last analysis materialism was also a hypothesis, but he considered it a better hypothesis than a metaphysical non-material spiritual force<sup>8</sup> mainly for two reasons. First, the hypothesis of materialism can be made within the limits of rational thought and scientific knowledge providing a stimulus for its further expansion.<sup>9</sup> If materialism is accepted, man's urge to explain phenomena hitherto considered inexplicable would grow, but the assumption of a metaphysical non-

5. In the Jail Volumes he wrote . "The fashionable mysticism of our day is not the result of any absolute inadequacy of scientific knowledge. It is the symptom of a social disease. It reflects the striving for a decayed ruling class to restrain the forces of social progress, antagonistic to the established order". *Jail Volumes*, IV, p. 23(a).

While discussing the views of Jeans and Eddington he pointed out that they "philosophically cannot free themselves from the traditions of the ideology of class domination and therefore entertain philosophical views, which directly or indirectly support spiritualism, contradicting their own scientific theories." *Jail Volumes*, III, p. 109(a)

6. BC, p. 43.

7. RRR, II, p. 302.

8. *The Marxian Way*, II, p. 366.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 367.

material force would place man at the tender mercies of an immutable providence which would consequently retard the expansion of human knowledge. This view of Roy is, however, incompatible with the fact that a large number of scientists contributed to the growth of human knowledge without accepting materialism. Secondly, freedom of man, Roy thought, is inconsistent with the faith in the omnipotence of God. He wrote: "The restoration of God, in one form or another, will necessarily deprive man of his sovereignty. Surrendering spiritual freedom, he will naturally doubt his power, and forego his right to remake the world."<sup>10</sup> Faith in God, Roy maintained, is inconsistent with the view that man is the maker of his own destiny, because, religion reduces man simply as the means for the manifestation of God's grace. Roy proclaimed that the Radical Humanist philosophy, therefore deposed God because, as he said, "unless we can depose God, (it is) no use fighting for freedom."<sup>11</sup>

Though he accepted materialism as an explanation of the origin of the world, inorganic as well as organic, Roy never accepted what we may call social materialism. Human nature, according to the philosophy of New Humanism, is determined more by physical and biological rather than by social and environmental factors. The experience of the Russian Revolution had undermined Roy's faith in the supremacy of the social environment over the nature of man. The main problem before him was to discover in human nature a sanction for a harmonious social order as well as the basic incentive to all social progress. The first he discovered in human reason and the second in man's urge for freedom which was also ultimately rooted in human reason or intelligence. Roy's assumption of the rational man and his political philosophy based upon it revived the tradition of the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment secularised the old concept of the "law of nature" which was at first propounded by the Greek thinkers.<sup>12</sup> By natural law they understood an intuition of the human heart about what is morally just. The Stoic philosophers and the mediaeval schoolman equated natural law with reason, and their concept of reason was still associated with divine revelation. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, natural laws were understood more or less in the same

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 79-80.

11. BC, p. 43.

12. See Chapter "The Natural Law", RRR, I, p. 132-160.

sense as laws of science. 'In science, the laws of physical nature are deduced rationally from the observed facts about the nature of matter. From this it was concluded that the laws of human nature could also be deduced from an observation of the supposed facts of human nature. Once the laws of human nature were established scientifically it was assumed that man would conform to them just as matter conformed to the physical law of nature. Man must therefore be made conscious of his own nature. Education or enlightenment was the only way to human regeneration. In his philosophy of New Humanism Roy carried the tradition of the Law of Nature understood in the rational and secular sense and tried to explain the basis of human reason more fully.

As a materialist Roy tried to trace the roots of human nature to physical and biological factors. Man is the product of a long process of evolution—physical and biological—and the nature of man is determined by this process. First, subject to an evolutionary process, human nature, Roy maintained, cannot be an immutable category. He took up an evolutionary view of human nature and wrote : "It is a hackneyed saying that human nature never changes. The truth however is just the contrary: to change is human nature. Otherwise there is no sense in regarding the history of civilization as an evolutionary process."<sup>13</sup> But in spite of the evolution and changes there are, Roy maintained, some constant factors in human nature and the origin of these factors were traced by him to this process of evolution itself. Roy recognised the uniqueness of the individual but as human beings they all have some factors in common which form the foundation of human nature.

In the philosophy of Radical Humanism two basic traits of human nature are emphasised. One is the rationality of man and the other is the human urge for freedom. Roy tried to trace the origin of these two basic traits of human nature to the physical universe and to the pre-human biological evolution without postulating anywhere a transcendental category. He, in other words, tried to interpret human nature in physical and naturalistic terms.

It is an old assumption of political philosophy that man is a rational animal. Roy tried to discover the root of human rationality to the law-governed physical universe. He wrote :

"Rising out of the background of the law governed physical nature, the human being is essentially rational."<sup>14</sup> There is strict uniformity in physical nature and all its phenomena are regulated by inexorable laws. Man with his highly developed brain and nervous system serving as the means of inter-relations between the organism and its environment becomes conscious of the law-governed character of the universe. "The mind," Roy wrote, "becomes conscious of the environments, the radius of which gradually expands until the entire nature is embraced. It being consciousness of a law-governed system, human mind is necessarily rational in essence."<sup>15</sup> In the physical world man finds that nothing happens arbitrarily. Every phenomenon in nature is connected with some other phenomenon or phenomena. From this experience man concludes that nothing can happen in nature without some cause. This makes him rational, and he begins to think in terms of cause and effect. Explaining the rise of human reason he wrote: "Reason is the simple, instinctive notion that every object of experience is connected with some other object or objects which may or may not have been already experienced; but, because of the belief in the connection, which holds the world of experience together, their existence is assumed."<sup>16</sup> The reason in man, in the words of Roy, is thus an echo of the harmony of the universe.<sup>17</sup> He pointed out that reason did not appear suddenly in man, but in a rudimentary form it is present even among animals, though their activities still remained on the instinctive level. And an instinctive act, he pointed out, presupposes consciousness, and results from the automatic operation of intelligence.<sup>18</sup> Human rationality, according to Roy, is a developed form of instinctive rationality present in the animal kingdom. Man, he maintained, inherited the mental and emotional equipments of the animals as the basis of "humanness."<sup>19</sup>

Roy thus traced the origin of human rationality to "the rational foundation of the objective physical world."<sup>20</sup> In his philosophy "reason has, as it were", as Dr. J. P. Van Praag has-

14. Principle No. 4.

15. RRR, I, p. 20.

16. *Ibid.*

17. NH, p. 36.

18. *The Marxian Way*, II, p. 68.

19. RRR, I, p. 18.

20. *Ibid.*, I, p. 180.



put it, "emancipated itself in man from living nature."<sup>21</sup> The process of emancipation began with the pre-human biological organisms and reached the culmination in man. Roy thus found a secular foundation of human rationality and made it independent of any transcendental significance. His main purpose was to integrate materialist philosophy with human reason, and he said that "unless we can trace reason to the common denominator of monistic Materialism, rationalism has no meaning for me".<sup>22</sup> Trying to secularise the concept of human reason Roy observed: "Reason is not a metaphysical category. It is the consciousness of the harmony of nature, and as such an empirical reality. Rationality is a biological function, which is microcosmic echo of the rhythm of the cosmos."<sup>23</sup> Reason is an empirical reality because it is represented by physical nature itself ("Physical determinism is reason in nature"),<sup>24</sup> and it is a biological function because man becomes conscious of it owing to his highly developed brain which he has inherited from his animal ancestry.

It is interesting to note here that in the Jail Volumes there is a passage very similar to the ideas explained above. Roy wrote: "Rationalism is the mental reflex of physical causality... Causality is reason in nature. If nature were irrational, that is to say, if causality were not an objective reality, an ontological category, rationalist thought would be impossible. Intelligence is a biological function, and, as such, is a part of physical nature. Reason is born of intelligence. It is the consciousness of causality in nature."<sup>25</sup> Explaining the secular character of human reason he observed: "In the light of the demonstrated fact that causality is an objective reality and an ontological category, reason ceases to be a metaphysical mystery. Reason derives its authority from the objective physical laws, which, in the last analysis, are but generalised statements of causal relations."<sup>26</sup>

It should be pointed out here that by describing man as rational, Roy oversimplified the problem of human nature. The

21. Dr. J. P. Van Praag, *Humanism* (International Humanist and Ethical Union), p. 11.

22. BC, p. 66.

23. M. N. Roy, *The Rhythm of the Cosmos* (Inaugural address at the Second All India Rationalist Conference held at Tenali in February 1962 and published in the form of a pamphlet), p. 17.

24. RRR, II, p. 257.

25. Jail Volumes, VII, pp. 101(b) — 102(a).

26. *Ibid.*, pp. 102(b) — 103(a).

dynamism of non-rational factors of the human mind has not been taken fully into consideration in his philosophy. Roy did not, it is true, exclude emotions and will from the concept of human nature, but he maintained that they could be reconciled with reason. "Reason being a biological property, it is not the antithesis of will. Intelligence and emotion can be reduced to a common biological denominator."<sup>27</sup> He explained his point thus: "(Man) rose out of the background of the physical universe, through the long process of biological evolution. The umbilical cord was never broken; man, with his mind, intelligence, will remain an integral part of the physical universe. The latter is a cosmos—a law-governed system. Therefore, man's being and becoming, his emotions, will, ideas are also determined; man is essentially rational."<sup>28</sup> Man's will and emotions are also determined in the sense that they are caused by physical factors. They are rational in so far as they are not mysterious categories. Understood in this light, Roy's assertion that "will is not an irrational impulse"<sup>29</sup> may be accepted. But there is no denying the fact that human will and emotion sometimes tend to go against rational consideration. Roy was not quite oblivious of this aspect of human nature. He wrote—although in a different context—that "most emotional acts are voluntary but not rational result of free thinking. Will often defies reason."<sup>30</sup> The presence of will having a tendency to defy reason is a specific feature of man's character, and it makes human nature an extremely complex phenomenon. The physical nature follows a set of laws mechanically which makes the physical system law-governed. The lower animals also follow their instinct without having any tendency contrary to it within themselves. But on the human level the problem becomes complex by the presence of a conflict between different tendencies within man. Roy could not ignore this problem and he wrote: "The universe is a physical system. Having grown out of that background, the human being is also a physical system. But there is a great difference: The physical Universe is law-governed, the laws being inherent in itself, whereas man possesses will and can choose. Between the world of man and the world of inanimate matter there lies the vast world of biological evolu-

27. Principle No. 4.

28. NH, pp. 35-36.

29. RRR, I, p. 40.

30. *The Humanist Way*, V, p. 66.

tion. The latter has its own specific laws which, however, can be referred back to the general laws of the world of dead matter; consciousness appears at a much later stage. Therefore human will cannot be directly related to the laws of the physical universe"<sup>31</sup>. Admitting this peculiar feature of man, Roy asserted that "inasmuch as the entire process of biological evolution takes place in the context of the world of dead matter, human will cannot be an antithesis to the law-governedness of the physical universe. Reason harmonises the two"<sup>32</sup>. In plain language it means that it is possible for man to direct his will and control his emotion with his rational faculty.

It may however be conceded that man's emotions, will, ideas etc. are determined and can be explained by physical factors and therefore are rational (as opposed to mysterious) categories. But does this functional rationality of the human organism guarantee rational thinking of the human mind? In man's mind passions, emotions and feelings play a dominant role and very often they tend to go counter to the rational thinking. This conflict between passion and reason within the human mind is a common experience of man. The development of psycho-analysis has rendered the problem of human nature all the more complex. The assumption of the "Unconscious" determining the large part of human behaviour has challenged the concept of rational man. The "libido" theory indicates that man's activities are largely determined by impulses rather than by rational calculation. The development of art, science, social reform etc. was explained by Freud as "sublimation" of the thwarted libido. The 'libido' has been interpreted differently by different writers. Jung does not share Freud's view of Pan-sexualism. According to him the 'libido' is an undifferentiated primal life force which takes the form of various instincts. Adler came to the conclusion that the driving force of life is the Will to Power and the urge to exercise superiority over others. Along with psycho-analysis there developed another school of thought throwing doubts on the assumption that man is rational. This trend of thought is known as anti-intellectualism though the name is a misleading one. The so-called "anti-intellectuals" are not against reason or intelligence. After much observation they have come to the conclusion that human thought and conduct are more often than not determined by appetites, passion, prejudices, conditional reflexes

31. RH, p. 16.

32. *Ibid*

etc. Graham Wallas in his book *Human Nature in Politics* pointed out after a study of British politics that the voters did not consider the issues logically and rationally, not even by intelligent self-interest, but were mostly influenced by prejudices, flattery, good looks of the candidates and many other minor and negligible factors. Pareto and many others also came to the same conclusion. Referring to the development of psycho-analysis, Roy pointed out that it has only a limited scope and can deal only with psycho-pathological cases and all its theories which claim a wider application were considered by him as "far-fetched"<sup>33</sup>. The doctrine of psycho-analysis may not be wholly true but it has raised an important problem, namely, the role of passion and blind urges in shaping man's conduct and behaviour. While analysing the concept of human nature Roy did not take this aspect of the problem seriously into consideration though he recognised that the psychological factors must be given proper place in social dynamics<sup>34</sup>. The concept of human nature should be based upon a more thorough analysis of human instincts and emotion. These points are mentioned not to establish the irrational character of man but only to emphasise the complexity of his nature. Different thinkers have judged men from different stand-points and all views are only partially true. Man, in the words of Max. C. Otto, "escapes the neat formulas in which the unimaginative would capture him"<sup>35</sup>.

Secondly, it is doubtful whether human rationality can be derived from rational or law-governed world. On the human level reason means reasonable. Otherwise, reason can never be conceived as the basis of morality, as Roy tried, we shall see later on, to show. But can law-governedness of the physical nature make men reasonable? Law-governedness may give rise to a feeling of fatalism in man rather than rationality understood in the above sense. The physical world is determined by inexorable and mechanical laws, and from this experience man may conclude that everything including life is also determined in the same way. This may logically give rise to fatalism rather than rationalism. Ludwing Von Mises argues almost on the same line as Roy and says that "man is what he is because he lives in a world of regularity and has the mental power to

33. *The Marxian Way*, I, p. 271.

34. *Ibid.*, II, p. 183.

35. Max. C. Otto, *Science and Moral Life*, p. 38.

conceive the relation of cause and effect"<sup>36</sup>. Human thinking on the basis of cause-and-effect relation leads him to realise that if he wants to attain a definite end, he must resort to the appropriate means<sup>37</sup>. But man's power to postulate a desirable end presupposes his freedom of will and ability of making a choice between a number of alternatives. Human rationality must be understood only with reference to his freedom to choose. Man can be reasonable not in the context of the law-governed universe but only when he is confronted with the problem of choice. Roy (also Von Mises) recognised man's freedom of will and ability to choose, but, as we have mentioned earlier, this freedom, in Roy's own admission, cannot be related to "the laws of the physical universe". Therefore, human rationality cannot be derived directly from the law-governed universe.

The urge for freedom, according to M. N. Roy, is the second basic trait of human nature. The origin of this urge was also traced by him to the animal world and to the biological heritage of man. But before discussing the origin of this urge let us first explain what he meant by it. He defined freedom as "progressive disappearance of all restrictions on the unfolding of the potentialities of individuals, as human beings, and not as cogs in the wheels of a mechanical social organism"<sup>38</sup>. The essence of freedom lies in the unfoldment of the potentialities latent in man, but these potentialities, according to Roy, are not divine in character but "biologically inherent in man"<sup>39</sup>. Man is biologically so constituted with his complex nervous system and highly developed brain that everyone has infinite potentialities of development within him. And the urge for freedom is a creative urge felt by individuals to develop these potentialities. Freedom thus has not simply an economic or political content but refers to the all-sided development of man's "intellectual and other human potentialities"<sup>40</sup>. A man cannot be free unless he becomes conscious of the potentialities within him and feels the urge to develop them. Human freedom, Roy warned, would not automatically follow from a certain pattern of socio-economic reconstruction nor can it be imposed upon the masses by a group

36. Ludwig Von Mises, *Theory and History*, p. 74.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 178.

38. Principle No. 3.

39. RRR, II, p. 288.

40. *Ibid.*, II, p. 277.

of well-meaning individuals<sup>41</sup>. Freedom, he said, must not be conceived as "an ideal to be attained all at once, at some particular point of time, but as an experience to be made in every moment of man's life"<sup>42</sup>. In other words, freedom depends more upon the mind of the individual, his desire to unfold his potentialities, than upon any external social conditions. Not that freedom was conceived by Roy as quite independent of the social context. He admitted that the circumstances under which man lives set a limit to human endeavours. "Made under adverse circumstances", he wrote, "the best of endeavours may not be fruitful, while under more favourable conditions they may bear fruit"<sup>43</sup>. But there is no necessary relation between social condition and human freedom, and even under the most favourable conditions man may remain indifferent towards the development of his inherent potentialities. Roy pointed out that "a comfortable physical existence often discourages all creative human endeavours and blunts the moral sensibility of human beings", which, he said, "warrants the conclusion that in a society which attaches greater importance to material well-being and economic prosperity, freedom may be placed at a discount"<sup>44</sup>. Economic prosperity, in other words, would never lead to freedom unless the people individually feel the urge for it within themselves. "While economic sufficiency", Roy wrote, "may be helpful to cultural growth, the view that the one is the precondition of the other is historically false and logically untenable"<sup>45</sup>. It is obvious that the miscarriage of the Russian Revolution led Roy to conceive freedom in this broad perspective. The Russian experiment showed that economic prosperity may lead to human servitude and the change of the economic structure may not necessarily mean the change of the cultural outlook of man. He, therefore, concluded that the concept of freedom must have, in addition to economic prosperity and political democracy, a cultural connotation and its basis must be sought in human nature itself rather than in external environment.

Thus, the urge for freedom, according to Roy, is embedded

41. M. N. Roy, *Cultural Requisites of Freedom* (Modern Age and India Seminar lectures No. 14, Leftist Book Club, Calcutta-12), pp. 182, 191.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 178.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 179.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 181.

45. NH, p. 72.

in human nature. Man inherited it from his animal ancestry. "The quest for freedom is the continuation on a higher level—of intelligence and emotion—of the biological struggle for existence"<sup>46</sup>. The urge for existence is a universal urge in the biological world, and the human urge for freedom, Roy maintained, is the developed form of this animal urge. The animals try to exist but man tries not only to exist but to prosper and to unfold his diverse potentialities. On the sub-human biological level the struggle for existence is very largely mechanical. The environment, if unfavourable, may lead to the extinction of the organism, and the struggle for existence is the striving of the organism to save itself from the tyranny of nature. The organism conducts this struggle by a process of mechanical adaptation. Those who can adapt themselves successfully survive, and those who cannot become extinct. But on the human level this struggle for existence takes a new form. It becomes purposive. Man does not seek simply to adapt himself to environment but tries to change the environment to suit his purpose. The proto-human ancestors of man, for example, had to depend upon their arms to pluck the fruits and tried to prolong their arms in order to wage the struggle for existence successfully, but the moment an anthropoid discovered that he could break a branch with which to pluck a fruit beyond the reach of his arm, the struggle for existence became the quest for freedom. The biological evolution tended towards the social evolution<sup>47</sup>. With this branch man began, as it were, his struggle to conquer nature and the modern highly developed technology is the continuation of that struggle which was "no longer for mere existence but in quest for freedom"<sup>48</sup>. The struggle for existence developed into a positive quest for freedom owing to man's desire to be free from the physical limitations and that incentive, Roy pointed out, was due to the power of the human brain. It was the human intelligence that enabled man to make use of a branch to pluck the fruits and the whole subsequent history of the conquest of nature was ultimately due to the superior intelligence of man<sup>49</sup>. Thus, the urge for freedom is also ultimately rooted in human intelligence or reason.

It may be pointed out here that Roy's definition of freedom

46. Principle No. 2.

47. M. N. Roy, *Cultural Requisites of Freedom*, p. 185.

48. BC, p. 46.

49. *The Marxian Way*, II, p. 66.

appears to be narrow and negative.<sup>50</sup> It is simply the disappearance of all restrictions on the unfolding of the potentialities of individuals. Freedom, as defined by him, does not include the presence of the conditions favourable for the development of human potentialities. In this connection we may profitably refer to the definition of liberty given by Laski. He defined it as "the absence of restraint upon the existence of those social conditions which, in modern civilization, are the necessary guarantees of individual happiness"<sup>51</sup>. Here we find what we may call a positive concept of freedom. By individual happiness Laski actually means "the continuous expression of his personality"<sup>52</sup>—the same as the unfoldment of individual potentialities. Though Roy in his writings did not deny the importance of social conditions, in his definition of the concept of freedom he ignored the positive social aspect altogether. Most probably he feared that the emphasis upon the social conditions might lead to the eclipse of the individual. Commenting upon Green's concept of positive freedom, Roy wrote that it "was the capacity of self-realisation, the conditions for the attainment of which ideal are guaranteed by an orderly harmonious social world. The implication of this positive idea of freedom is clear enough : Individual freedom is realised in the harmony of the community. An echo of the Hegelian doctrine of the state"<sup>53</sup>. Roy's approach to the social aspect of human freedom was shame-faced. The miscarriage of the Russian revolution which gave emphasis upon the environmental conditions led him to swing to the other extreme.

Roy tried to trace the origin of the human urge for freedom to the biological struggle for existence. The urge for freedom as defined by him is not simply a desire for a comfortable life but a creative urge to unfold the varied potentialities within the individuals. He refused to admit any causal relation between economic well-being and the urge for freedom, and referred to the great artists, poets and scientists who lived in great poverty but in spite of all hardships and handicaps were successful to

50. Though 'freedom' is essentially a political concept, this point should still be discussed here since Roy considered the urge for freedom as a basic urge of human nature.

51. Harold Laski, *Liberty in the Modern State*, New Post-war edition), p. 48.

52. *Ibid.*, p. 49.

53. RRR, II, p. 127.



unfold their creative talents.<sup>54</sup> The urge for freedom, as defined by Roy, is an ideal for man, and the ability to conceive and follow an ideal is a special human attribute. But an ideal should not be confused with the biological nature of man. Human nature deals with the empirical rather than the ideal man. There is undoubtedly a close relation between what man is and what he should become, but still a line of distinction must be drawn between the two. The urge for security, comfort and prosperity rather than the urge for freedom as defined by Roy may logically be considered as a continuation of the struggle for existence. Man's struggle with Nature may directly be related to his desire for a comfortable existence but the urge to unfold one's intellectual and other human potentialities is essentially a human urge rather than a biological heritage.

In Roy's ethical doctrine freedom is the highest value—the supreme criterion of all value judgements. Whatever promotes freedom is good and whatever retards it is bad. He wrote : “Freedom is not an instrumental value. It is not a means to something; it is an end in itself”<sup>55</sup>.

The quest for freedom, Roy maintained, leads necessarily to a search for the truth. The shaping of the environment into some purposive form to suit the interest of man implies knowledge of the environment. Any attempt to bring Nature under human control for the purpose of promoting his freedom presupposes knowledge of the laws of Nature. As man acquires knowledge of the laws of Nature he discovers the truth because, as Roy has put it, “truth is the content of knowledge”<sup>56</sup>. Truth, according to him, is not a metaphysical concept but a matter of human experience, a matter of fact. He defined truth as “correspondence with objective reality—the relation between two objects of experience”<sup>57</sup>. Knowledge of the laws of Nature therefore means the discovery of the Truth. The search for truth, therefore, according to Roy, is intimately associated with the quest for freedom.<sup>58</sup> Freedom, knowledge and truth are thus

54. M. N. Roy, *Cultural Requisites of Freedom*, p. 181.

55. *Ibid.*, p. 191.

56. Principle No. 2.

57. RRR, I, p. 32.

58. In the *Jail Volumes* Roy once referred to ‘the urges of life’ compelling man to undertake ceaseless struggle against nature. He wrote : “The urges of life compel man to take up the endless struggle with nature. In course of this struggle the man penetrates deeper and deeper

woven harmoniously in the texture of his ethical philosophy. From this relation of freedom, knowledge and truth, Roy came to a sweeping conclusion. He wrote: "The hierarchy of humanist axiology thus is freedom, knowledge, truth. They are not autonomous; they are interrelated, logically as well as ontologically. Therefore, freedom cannot be attained by immoral means, nor can an enlightened man be a liar"<sup>59</sup>. But a logical relation does not imply a moral connotation. The urge for freedom might have supplied the impetus to discover the truth by unveiling the mysteries of Nature. But once knowledge is acquired there is no guarantee that it would be used only to promote human freedom. Science is the result of man's search for the truth but it is being used to destroy human civilization. The statement that the enlightened man cannot be a liar is also highly misleading. If enlightenment includes moral excellence then the statement is simply tautology but if it implies intellectual attainment, it is both empirically untenable and logically fallacious. Knowledge itself does not ensure self-control which is the essence of morality. Knowledge is power but it does not indicate the way in which it will be used because knowledge is ethically neutral.<sup>60</sup>

The rationality of man which is the basic trait of human nature was considered by Roy as the only secure foundation of morality. He maintained that man is moral because he is

into the mysteries of nature, and progressively these mysteries cease to be mysteries." *Jail Volumes, II*, p. 107(b) contd.

The idea underlying this passage bears close resemblance with his concept of the human quest for freedom and search for truth.

59 RH, p. 18.

60. While discussing his ethical philosophy Dr Prakash Chandra has referred to this view of Roy and accepted it 'without raising any question whatsoever. He quotes the following passage from Roy: "It [the urge for freedom] is the basic incentive for him to acquire knowledge and conquer environment by knowing them. In course of these struggles man discovers truth which is the content of knowledge. The hierarchy of Humanist axiology thus is freedom, knowledge, truth" (M. N. Roy, *Radical Humanist*, p. 18). After quoting the passage he immediately comments: "They are interrelated logically. Therefore freedom cannot be attained by immoral means. Humanism thus makes man no longer subordinate to any imaginary forces. Knowledge endows him with the powers to carry on the never ending struggle for greater freedom and search for truth". Dr Prakash Chandra, *The Political Philosophy of M. N. Roy* (unpublished), pp. 118-119. Knowledge may indeed enable man to carry on his struggle for freedom and search for truth but their relation with morality remains still unexplained.

rational. "Morality", Roy wrote, "emanates from the rational desire for harmonious and mutually beneficial social relations"<sup>61</sup>. Tracing the origin of morality he observed: "One knows from experience what is good for him and what is bad for him. Therefore he generalises that what is good for him is good for all like himself, and what is bad for him is also bad for all. That is the origin of morality"<sup>62</sup>.

Man requires society for the unfoldment of his own potentialities and therefore compliance with the social laws and regulations also serves ultimately his own interest<sup>63</sup>. Roy held that such rational considerations make man moral not under any compulsion but voluntarily, the sanction of morality being embedded in his own nature.<sup>64</sup> Morality, therefore, according to him, must be referred to man's innate rationality. He admitted that his own existence is the primary concern of man and therefore in this sense man is selfish, but "rationality", he pointed out, "can subordinate man's selfishness to enlightened self-interest which is a social virtue"<sup>65</sup>. Enlightened self-interest can harmonise individual welfare with social welfare. Morality, he said, is not a mystic or mysterious category but "a biological function, on the level of consciousness"<sup>66</sup>. Roy described conscience as the measure of the consciousness of man's social responsibility<sup>67</sup>. Conscience is a biological function inasmuch as the human brain, a biological organ, is the source of its origin. Conscience, Roy maintained, must not be referred to the imaginary divine spark in man but should be taken as the expression of his essential rationality<sup>68</sup>. There are rules of conduct even among the higher animals possessed with the instinct of reason, and man, he pointed out, inherited those rules from his animal ancestry as the foundation of his morality.<sup>69</sup> Human morality, therefore, is secular in character.

Roy did not recognise any causal relation between morality and religion. Abiding moral values must be rooted in the basic and original attributes of human nature but "originally", Roy

61. NH, p. 35.

62. RRR, I, p. 28.

63. See Chapter on Social, Political and Economic Doctrines.

64. RH, p. 18.

65. NH, p. 103.

66. Principle No. 13.

67. *The Marxian Way*, I, p. 180.

68. *Ibid.*, II, p. 277.

69. RRR, I, p. 28.

asserted, "man was not religious"<sup>70</sup>. Human nature, he said, is not to believe in some benevolent super-human power. He took up the attitude of an orthodox materialist about the origin of religion though he no longer considered it as an instrument devised by the exploiters to perpetuate the system of exploitation. Religion, Roy maintained, is a product of man's reason and urge for freedom—the two basic attributes of human nature. He agreed with James Frazer that the age of religion was preceded by the age of magic. Roy held that faith in magic, however erroneous, had a rational basis. It was based upon the assumption that the same causes would always produce the same effects. In the primitive age, owing to his ignorance man believed that the magicians by sheer force of spells and enchantments could produce desirable effects. As experience exposed the limitations of the power of the magicians, man imagined a number of gods controlling the various phenomena of nature. Thus arose the gods of natural religion, which, Roy pointed out, "was the rational effort of the barbarian to explain the phenomena of nature and his experience thereof"<sup>71</sup>. In his search for the cause of such natural phenomena as rain, storm, movements of the stars etc. man postulates various gods and goddesses of the natural religion. The search was an expression of his innate rationality—his faith that everything must have a cause. Monotheism followed as a logical corollary to the primitive rationalist view of polytheism. The gods of natural religion must be traced to one fundamental cause and thus arose the notion of the Almighty Creator. The gods of natural religion as well as the Supreme Being of monotheism, Roy maintained, was analogous to the hypotheses of science. Both science and religion are attempts to explain the mysteries of nature, and religion was regarded by Roy as a backward stage of science. He characterised religion as "a rational system of thought, limited by the inadequate store of positive knowledge"<sup>72</sup>. On the same ground he described religion during his Marxist period as "the naive form of nascent science"<sup>73</sup>. Religion and science are thus two stages in the spiritual evolution of man, both determined by man's urge for freedom and his rational nature. The religious

70. M. N. Roy, "Religion, Culture and Durga Puja", (*Amrita Bazar Patrika* Puja Special Number, 1950), p. 10.

71. RRR, I, p. 26.

72. *Ibid.*, I, p. 36.

73. Jail Volumes, III, p. 10(b).

spirit of absolute dependence upon God represents, according to him, the human urge for freedom, because, the urge underlying the sentiment of surrender is a desire—desire for deliverance with the help and grace of God. It is, therefore, “an intelligent act—an act committed with a purpose, believing that it will produce the desired result”<sup>74</sup>.

Roy pointed out that the basic assumption of religion, whether polytheism or monotheism, is that Nature is a law-governed system and that its laws are made by some superior power. Religion urges man to propitiate those superior powers either by sacrifice or by prayer ultimately for his own welfare. Religion does not deny order in nature but ascribes it to the inscrutable will of God. The idea of the law-governed universe, inherent in religious thought, laid the foundation of modern science which tried to find out the laws of nature within Nature itself instead of postulating a superior power as law-maker. Aided by the increased store of knowledge human reason gave up religion as an unnecessary hypothesis but moral values must survive religion and therefore they must be integrated with a secular philosophy.

Roy believed that a system of secular morality was of vital importance for human freedom. In the first place, in this age of secularism, brought about by the development of science, moral values anchored in religion would have meaning only in man's private life.<sup>75</sup> In the absence of secular morality a secular state may logically degenerate into a state without morality. On the other hand, any attempt to revive religious morality would inevitably go directly against the modern principle of secularism. The only remedy to this problem is to rear moral values on the scientific principle of secularism.

Secondly, not only secularism but the freedom of man itself, Roy believed, was incompatible with religious morality. He wrote : “The religious faith in man's moral essence limits his sovereignty, indeed it is a negation of the liberating concept. In the last analysis, it implies that man as man cannot be moral; to be so, he must feel himself subordinated to a super-human power. With this paralysing sense of spiritual subservience, man can never be really free”<sup>76</sup>. As we have already mentioned Roy believed that the freedom of man is incompatible with the omni-

74. RRR, I, p. 40.

75. RH, p. 13.

76. RRR, II, pp. 254-55.

potence of God, and therefore religious morality was condemned by him as 'spiritual terrorism'<sup>77</sup>. To deserve freedom, Roy thought, man must become moral out of his own free will. He asked—"Can man be moral by his nature, without any compulsion, be it of religious or law or social convention?"<sup>78</sup> Spontaneous and voluntary morality would be possible only if the origin of morality could be traced to some quality inherent in man. This he found in man's innate rationality.

Roy's concern for moral values and his attempt to integrate them with the rational nature of man instead of associating them with religion or treating them simply as a super-structure upon the given socio-economic factors can be traced back to his earlier writings. In the Jail Volumes he wrote: "The religious man's morality is either hypocrisy or performed under duress. A materialist is moral by his own conviction. He practises virtue not as a payment for a place in heaven or for the salvation of his soul, but simply because he cannot help it"<sup>79</sup>. In his ethical philosophy Roy was essentially an Epicurean, both during his Marxist and Humanist periods.

So far we have discussed the sanction and basis of moral values. Let us now briefly refer to their content. The content of religious morality is not necessarily inconsistent with that of secular rational ethics. Religion also has a rational basis and therefore many of the religious moral values, Roy held, may be incorporated in the system of rationalistic ethics. "One can be an unmitigated materialist and yet", Roy wrote, "most punctiliously obey the Ten Commandments without in the least compromising his freedom"<sup>80</sup>.

Moral values are divided by Roy into two categories—changing values and basic values. Some values are dependent upon social conditions and they would necessarily change with changes in society. "Given the biological foundation of the impulse of morality", Roy wrote, "the forms of its expression, if not the essence, is bound to change in course of the process of social evolution"<sup>81</sup>. Some moral values, therefore, he explained, must be referred to the context of changing social relations. But, though moral values have been enriched, expanded

77. *The Marxian Way*, II, p. 272.

78. *Ibid.*, I, p. 274.

79. *Jail Volumes*, II, p. 123(b). Contd.

80. *The Marxian Way*, I, p. 180.

81. *Ibid.*, p. 182.

and amplified in course of human experience, he accepted certain ethical principles as basic human values<sup>82</sup>. They are eternal and transcend time and space because they are not causally connected with the material conditions of life of any particular age<sup>83</sup>. Religious morality, however, appears to be inconsistent with the changing or dynamic concept of human values. With divine sanction religious morality tends to become dogmatic and it refuses to change with changes in the social conditions and therefore religious philosophy cannot take an evolutionary view of human morality. He observed : "To be moral, one needs only to be human ; it is not necessary to go in search of divine or mystic-metaphysical sanction. Humanist morality is evolutionary"<sup>84</sup>. Rational ethics, moreover, is closely related with aesthetics. It is based upon the Renaissance culture which was remarkable for its passionate worship of beauty and partiality for the joy of life<sup>85</sup>. In so far as religious moral values are influenced by asceticism they are inconsistent with the humanist concept of rational ethics. "Morality", Roy wrote, "will be a soul-killing virtue, if it cannot co-habit with the pleasant, the enjoyable and the beautiful"<sup>86</sup>.

Roy's attempt to reconcile ethics with rationalism and materialism in the philosophy of Humanism is a subject of great controversy. Some are of opinion that without faith in God, a philosophy of Humanism cannot be built up and practised. Following Jacques Maritain, the French Catholic theorist, we may distinguish between two kinds of humanism, the *theocentric* and *anthropocentric* humanism, the former being based upon religion and the latter continuing the tradition of the Renaissance and (in the opinion of many including Maritain) the Reformation.<sup>87</sup> In the West the foremost exponent of the theocentric humanism in our times is Jacques Maritain himself. In India Mahatma Gandhi, Sri Aurobindo, Swami Vivekananda along with many others belonged to this tradition. Recently Jayaprakash Narayan, the well known Bhoodan leader of India, has also developed a humanist philosophy and has given up materialism in order to make room for ethics. He explains his ideas thus : "If man

82. BC, p. 35.

83. *The Marxian Way*, I, p. 365.

84. RRR, II, p. 307.

85. *Ibid.*, I, p. 78.

86. *The Marxian Way*, I, p. 182.

87. Jacques Maritain, *True Humanism*, p. 19.

and his consciousness and the society and culture which he has built up are mere manifestations of matter—howsoever dialectically active—I can see no reason why in such a society, anyone should try to be good, that is, be generous, kind, unselfish. Why should then one feel sympathy with those who are weak, poor or sick? What is matter will dissolve into matter after death. So, what incentive can there be for moral behaviour? Lust for power or wealth or desire to win the acclaim of the people, or the regard of one's peers, may be incentives to action. But such incentives can have no concern with valuations of right or wrong"<sup>88</sup>.

As a matter of fact, the same set of moral values may be integrated into different schools of philosophical thought but Roy rightly pointed out that if ethics was to remain anchored in religion, the present trend towards secular public life cannot be reconciled with moral values. To uphold the tradition of secularism a system of secular ethics must be developed. But is human reason alone an adequate sanction for morality? The heart of man is no less real than the head, and ethics must be related to both. As Raymond Aron has put it: "The death of God leaves a void in the human soul; the need of the heart remains and must be satisfied...."<sup>89</sup>. The ethical progress of man requires not simply the development of his reasoning power but also training of the emotion. As Bertrand Russell puts it: "But wisdom is not *merely* intellectual: intellect may guide and direct, but does not guarantee the force that leads to action. The force must be derived from the emotions. Emotions that have desirable social consequence are not so easily generated as hate and rage and fear. In their creation, much depends upon early childhood; much also, upon economic circumstances. Something, however, can be done, in the course of ordinary education, to provide the nourishment upon which the better emotions can grow and to bring about the realization of what may give value to human life"<sup>90</sup>. Corliss Lamont, an advocate of the man-centred Humanism like Roy, also tries to find out in man an impulse—in addition to reason—as the basis of morality. He

88.. *Towards a New Society* (Published by the office for Asian Affairs, Congress for Cultural Freedom, New Delhi, India), p. 21.

89. Raymond Aron, *The Opium of the Intellectuals*, p. 279. This was written to explain the views of Auguste Comte but it has a general applicability also.

90. Bertrand Russell, *Power—a new social analysis*, pp. 315-16.



writes : "The sympathetic impulses in human nature, such as the parental, the sexual and the gregarious, become socially transformed and broadened in human association"<sup>91</sup>. Ashley Montagu also tried to find out a biological and emotional basis of the social and cooperative life of man. He writes : "The fact that such diverse groups as insects and mammals have developed social life strongly suggests the existence in organic life of deep-seated potentialities toward socialization or rather toward what might more properly be called sociality, the tendency to be attracted to and exist together with other organisms"<sup>92</sup>. Julian Huxley speaks of the 'religious emotion'<sup>93</sup> of man and stands for a religion without revelation or God. He thinks that belief in God in the sense of "a personal or super-personal Divine being, or at least a belief in supernatural beings of some kind"<sup>94</sup>, is not the essence of religion. The normal man, he says, "has an innate capacity for experiencing sanctity in certain events"<sup>95</sup>, and everything, according to him, comes "within the ambit of religion in so far as they are touched with sanctity by the mind, in so far as they are thought of and felt as sacred"<sup>96</sup>. Roy, however, considered the idea of a religion without the dogma of revelation as an absurdity<sup>97</sup>. Julian Huxley believes that religion without God is possible and he refers to Buddhism as an example<sup>98</sup> but Roy thought that some form of supernatural and transcendental force is an essential feature of religion. It is needless for us to enter into the controversy as to whether faith in God is essential for religion. But Roy's Pan-rationalism is not a sufficiently strong basis of the system of secular morality. The control of emotion by reason is necessary but human emotions themselves also have to be refined and morality must be related with those emotions which, in the words of Bertrand Russell, have desirable social consequences.

Roy's theory of secular morality did not effectively deal with the core of the ethical problem. The moral problem of to-day is not mainly, a problem of discovering new value-concepts or

91. Corlis Lamont, *Humanism as a Philosophy*, p. 277.

92. Ashley Montagu, *The Direction of Human Development*, p. 17.

93. Julian Huxley, *Religion without Revolution*, p. 122.

94. *Ibid.*, p. 100.

95. *Ibid.*, p. 100.

96. *Ibid.*, p. 111.

97. *The Marxian Way*, III, p. 269.

98. Julian Huxley, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

their roots and sanctions but of practising the long recognised perennial values in actual life in the face of various obstacles, psychological and social. Ignoring this aspect of the problem, Roy wrote : "The moral chaos of our time is not the Nemesis of modern materialist civilization; it has resulted from the fallacies of traditional ethical doctrines and classical moral philosophies. A moral regeneration of the modern world, therefore, calls for a moral philosophy with no transcendental, super-natural, extra-intellectual reference"<sup>99</sup>.

It is very difficult to agree with this view. The moral chaos of our time is due more to the failure of man than to the failure of moral philosophies. The uncontrolled selfishness of man rather than his failure to find a sanction of moral values within himself lies at the root of the moral problem of our time. The difference between rational will and selfish will is too obvious, and the problem of morality is essentially a problem of the subordination of the selfish will by the rational will of man. In other words, it is a problem of self-control. This point was not quite overlooked by Roy; on one occasion he pointed out that the control of passion must be given a prominent place in a rationalist system of ethics.<sup>100</sup> But how was this to be done? While reviewing the *Essays on Human Evolution* by Sir Arthur Keith, Roy wrote : "The purpose of the civilized man's life is to acquire control of the forces of nature in order to check the blind evolutionary urge, to tame the animal in man and to promote the development of humanness. Ethical values are created in that process. That is how ethics is related to science and the relation is not accidental, but causal".<sup>101</sup> But it is extremely difficult to establish any causal relation between man's attempt to acquire control of the forces of physical nature and his endeavour to suppress the animal in him. For the former, knowledge is enough; for the latter, knowledge alone is inadequate. Morality does not follow necessarily from the knowledge of what is good nor from a true theory of ethics. Roy's theory of ethics is open to the same charge which was levelled against Socrates long ago. Socrates maintained that if a man only knows what is right, he will infallibly do what is right. Roy also in the same strain appeared to believe that if man is given a true theory of ethics and can find the sanction of moral values

99. *The Marxian Way*. III, p. 267.

100. *RRR*, II, p. 115.

101. *The Marxian Way*, II, p. 196.

within his reason he would become moral. Therefore he held the fallacies of traditional moral doctrines responsible for man's moral crisis. Even when Roy had been a Marxist he believed that right knowledge was the only reliable foundation of ethical conduct. He wrote : "The materialist is virtuous not out of fear, by coercion, for greed; he is virtuous, because he cannot be otherwise, and it is knowledge that enables him to be so".<sup>102</sup> But men in fact do commit wrong knowing full well what is right. And a true theory of ethics would not by itself be a sufficient reason for him to tread the moral path. There is a gulf of difference between the application of knowledge to acquire control of the forces of Nature and the application of knowledge (of goodness) to guide the human conduct. The latter presupposes, as we have already pointed out, self-control and the subordination of the animal in man. The ability of man in practising self-control is the true index of his moral development. In an attempt to justify Roy's view Dr Dhar writes : "From this animal ancestry he (man) has been carrying over in his physiological and psychological make-up some primitive elements like greed, hatred, cruelty, etc. In individual cases these elements sometimes disobey the commands of reason and give psychology predominance over logic. This gives rise to the fundamental problem of ethics. It is, however, expected that reason would enable man to acquire increasing knowledge also about the mental world of man and thus to manipulate the evil passions so as to generate a social disposition in him".<sup>103</sup> Subordination of evil passions by reason is indeed the fundamental problem of ethics. It presupposes the training of will, an objective which cannot be realised simply by increased knowledge about the mental world of man. This knowledge is necessary but not adequate for the ethical development of man. Rational considerations alone cannot lead to self-control. Ethical principles may be deduced by human reason from experience but reason and knowledge may not by themselves persuade man to control his selfishness and lead his life in accordance with the rational ethical principles. Reason may urge man to be very cautious in the pursuit of his own self-interest. The rational pursuit of self-interest may not be incompatible with the practice of deceit and dishonesty provided the perpetrator can escape detection. Dr Prakash Chandra's con-

102. *Jail Volumes*, III, p. 156(a).

103. *Niranjan Dhar*, op. cit., p. 108.

tion that "when rationality extends man's selfishness to a wider field it becomes a social virtue"<sup>104</sup> does not, therefore, appear to be convincing.

Morality which implies self-control is essentially a human problem and any attempt to establish a logical connection between ethics and the physical world would be far-fetched. Therefore it is difficult for us to accept Roy's view that "a secular rationalist system of ethics can be logically deduced from the mechanistic cosmology of the materialist philosophy".<sup>105</sup> Explaining his view Roy wrote : "As the repository of residues antedating homo sapiens, the psyche is not a link between the mortal man and the immortal spirit (God); it is the umbelical cord which binds man, with all his spiritual attributes, to Mother Nature—the physical world. Spiritual values are physically determined, the psyche is a daughter of the Mother Earth".<sup>106</sup> For establishing the secular character of moral values it is enough to indicate the physical origin of life and the animal ancestry of man, the human psyche having inherited the impulses of the pre-human biological organism. But the attempt to establish a direct link between the human psyche and the physical world is both redundant and far-fetched. Facts and values belong to two different realms of existence and any social studies where judgments of value are involved must be different from the purely causal or factual sciences. Dr Sharma has rightly pointed out that "there is a gap between discoveries of facts and what ought to be done about them".<sup>106a</sup> But in order to reconcile moral values with materialism Roy sometimes ignored this vital difference. In order to give ethics a high place in social philosophy, "moral philosophy" Roy believed "must be related to science".<sup>107</sup> With the development of science and the rise of secularism, morality, according to him, tended to decline because of the failure to find out a causal relation between ethical values and the world of science. Moral philosophy, Roy wrote, was baffled by the problem of deducing values from facts.<sup>108</sup> Science was given the role of explaining facts of the transitory natural pheno-

104. Dr Prakash Chandra, *The Political Philosophy of M. N. Roy* (unpublished), pp. 134-135.

105. RRR, II, p. 258.

106. *The Marxian Way*, I, pp. 365-66

106a. B. S. Sharma, op. cit., p. 76.

107. RRR, II, p. 295.

108. RH, p. 12.

mena but the moral values were deduced from the metaphysical-transcendental order. Roy tried to do away with this dichotomy and sought to establish a causal relation between ethics and the philosophy of scientific materialism. The scientific outlook was thus confused with the spirit of "scientism" which implies the belief that the problems of social life are essentially similar to the problems of physical nature and both can be dealt with in the same way.

The dangerous implications of the fallacy of 'scientism' becomes evident when we examine Roy's ideal about the objective standard of rational ethics. To serve their purpose in society, moral values, Roy said, must have an objective standard. In the absence of this standard two persons in a similar situation may have different ideas of morality. This would inevitably give rise to a concept of relativity in ethics, and "a relativist morality", Roy said, "was bound to end in ethical nihilism".<sup>109</sup> It was mainly on this ground that Roy was opposed to the utilitarian or hedonistic theory of ethics. If individual pleasure or utility is taken as the sole criterion of morality, it cannot be based on an objective universal standard. Pleasure, whatever its role in human psychology, cannot, Roy pointed out, be raised to the status of a moral value<sup>110</sup>. The fundamental fallacy in the logic of utilitarian ethics was the conflict between personal or psychological hedonism and social or moral hedonism. If man does pursue and ought to pursue his own happiness or pleasure why should he pursue the greatest happiness of the greatest number? The principle of hedonism can reconcile the two only, as Roy thought, "by introducing the postulate of survival beyond the grave and with it the belief in ever-lasting rewards and punishments"<sup>111</sup>. The hope of eternal happiness in the life after death alone may induce a hedonist to follow the principle of the greatest good of the greatest number. Thus ultimately it comes to religious morality. Roy therefore concluded that utilitarianism offered a powerful critique of orthodox moral philosophy but it failed to present a positive alternative. All attempts to base morality on intuition would, Roy pointed out, necessarily suffer from the danger of relativity<sup>112</sup>. The Marxist approach towards ethical questions also, Roy maintained, belonged to the

109. RRR, II, p. 118.

110. *Ibid.*, p. 125.

111. *Ibid.*, p. 119.

112. *Ibid.*, p. 272.

tradition of utilitarianism though, under the influence of Hegel. Marx gave up the individualist approach to morality<sup>113</sup>. The Marxist theory introduced the idea of class morality. Whatever is done for the proletariat is good and whatever is done for the bourgeoisie is bad. This element of relativity in the Marxist idea of ethics made the communists indifferent to moral values.

Rationalistic ethics, Roy thought, would be free from this drawback and would supply an objective standard of moral values. A common norm of goodness would be discovered, he believed, only when goodness is rationally conceived. "As biological human beings", Roy wrote, "all men are similarly constructed, and therefore are likely to react more or less in a similar manner under similar circumstances, provided that a minimum background of knowledge is given. With the ability of discrimination and judgement, all men, being similarly constructed, can be expected to react similarly in a similar situation, and the ability can be cultivated. That is the hope for the much desired introduction of morality in politics and generally in public behaviour"<sup>114</sup>. Rationality, a constant factor in human nature, Roy believed, can alone supply an objective standard of moral values. Having discovered an objective standard of morality in human reason Roy expected uniformity in human behaviour to such an extent that he came dangerously close to collectivism. On a few basic values universal agreement of all may reasonably be expected, but the hope that men would react similarly in a similar situation is to ignore the complex construction of human psychology and the diversity of human nature. By cultivating the practice of reacting similarly to similar situation man would simply reduce himself to the position of automaton. Unless the diversity of human nature and personality is emphasised (and for this one must go to the non-rational aspect of human nature) the rational concept of man may ultimately lead to a dull uniformity not very different from totalitarianism. Dr Prakash Chandra, however, does not find any dangerous implication in Roy's view discussed above and he approves of it readily. Referring to Roy's contention that rational men are "likely to react more or less in a similar way under similar circumstances", he comments: "The universality of reason demands from all rational beings the same behaviour in the same circumstances. Radical Humanism, thus, rescues rational-

113. NH, pp. 20-21.

114. RRR, II, p. 273.

ism and ethics from the devastating consequences of scepticism".<sup>115</sup> Rationality should enable men to accommodate and tolerate diversities instead of annihilating them. Scepticism very often leads to further investigation and is not by itself antagonistic to rationality.

By an analysis of the concept of human nature Roy came to a very optimistic conclusion about man. Man, according to him, is rational, moral and cooperative. He pointed out that the "vulgar concept (of economic man) must be replaced by the reality of an instinctively rational being who is moral because he is rational"<sup>116</sup>. Without denying the presence of struggle and competition in society Roy wrote that "an unprejudiced study of history reveals that the desire to be helpful to fellow-man is a more fundamental human trait than competition and conflict".<sup>117</sup> Competition, ambition, jealousy, envy, combative instincts etc. were regarded by him more as acquired than inherent attributes of human nature<sup>118</sup>. The political, social and economic structure visualised by Roy as well as the methods suggested by him for their realisation were fundamentally based upon this optimistic conception of human nature.

The analysis of human nature as made by Roy appears to be empirically untenable. If man is by nature rational and moral and is inspired by the urge for freedom, why should there be so much irrationality and immorality and encroachment on freedom everywhere in the world? If, as Roy categorically stated, the desire to be helpful to fellow-men was a more fundamental human trait than competition and conflict, the present state of exploitation, corruption, deceit and tension would remain unexplained. Man, in fact, is selfish and self-centered as well as social and cooperative at the same time. No theory of human nature would be adequate to explain man empirically unless this dual nature of man is taken into consideration. Each of these concepts of man—economic and selfish on the one side and rational and moral on the other—is partially true, and therefore misleading. Roy wrote that "if man is selfish and irrational, society must be a coercive organisation, a prison house to be guarded by earthly policemen backed up by heavenly colleagues".<sup>119</sup> Is not society at least partially a coercive

115. Dr Prakash Chandra, op. cit., p. 110

116. Principle No. 13.

117. NH, p. 104.

118. *The Marxian Way*, II, p. 195. .

organisation maintained by the police and the army? To follow one's interest in harmony with the social good is indeed a virtue which every man should try to attain, but men actually very often follow their own individual interests disregarding and ignoring the legitimate interests of others. While analysing human nature objectively one must not ignore its vulgar and ugly aspect. Conflict and struggle are no less real in human society than cooperation and mutual aid. It is arbitrary to state which is the more fundamental trait of human nature. Trying to justify Roy's view Dr Prakash Chandra writes : "One who is horrified with the phrase that man is by nature selfish and thus jumps to the conclusion that this being an irrational impulse, any effort to rational co-operation is bound to fail takes the term in a very narrow sense. It is this vulgar interpretation of selfishness which is responsible for the advocacy of laissez faire economy. The apologists of this theory justified it on the ground that this selfishness must express itself in aggressive competition which they wrongly inferred will finally lead to Progress and well being in general. But the facts speak otherwise. That selfishness being essentially virtuous from the social point of view had led, on the other hand, to cooperative and not competitive living".<sup>120</sup> As a matter of fact, both competition and co-operation are "facts" of history. The roots of "aggressive competition" are also to be found in human nature and not in the laissez faire theory, however fallacious this theory may be. The presence of both the tendencies in man must be admitted and the subordination of conflict and struggle by mutual co-operation should be taken as the measure of social progress. The optimistic picture of man drawn by Roy is in sharp contrast to the ugly realities of the present day society. "It is better to err being over-optimistic than otherwise",<sup>121</sup> argues Dr Dhar in this connection. The study of human nature supplies the raw materials on the basis of which an ethical doctrine and a political philosophy can be raised. If the study is unrealistic, the theories based upon it will be unreliable. Pessimism and optimism are equally dangerous in this case.

Anticipating this charge of over-optimism, Roy maintained that though rationality and the urge for freedom are the basic

119. NH, p. 98.

120. Dr Prakash Chandra, op. cit., p. 135.

121. Dr Niranjana Dhar, op. cit., p. 126.



features of human nature, these urges, however, do not remain at the conscious level of most of the people. He categorically stated that the urge for freedom is the most basic human urge, but most of the time it remains buried deep under the surface of consciousness.<sup>122</sup> He also admitted that very often men do not behave rationally and this was because "man has been told for ages that his nature is to believe and to follow some higher authority".<sup>123</sup> In other words, religion has undermined man's faith in his own rationality. This faith in the Divine will was, according to Roy, the basis of man's subordination to successive oppressive terrestrial powers. Thus, religion destroyed also man's urge for freedom. Submission to Divine Law led man to submit to the monarchs claiming Divine Power, and thus his urge for freedom was replaced by what Roy called 'fear of freedom', taking the phrase from Erich Fromm.

All the evil aspects of man's social life cannot, however, convincingly be explained by the simple assertion that man has forgotten himself under the influence of religion which is, in Roy's own analysis, the product of human reason. The problem of human nature is much more complex than what he thought it to be. Along with passions, impulses, selfishness there is also reason in man and his moral and cultural progress is the result of the attempt to foster the rational faculty bringing other elements under its control. This does not necessarily require the postulate of the rational and moral man as an empirical reality.

122. RH, p. 17.

123. PPP, p. 139.

## PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY

A sound political philosophy must be grounded upon a comprehensive theory of history. A political theory is developed in the background of the problems of the contemporary age and to give it general validity a philosopher tries to integrate it with a philosophy of history. The roots of Roy's ideas on humanist historiology must be traced to his own experience. As we have already pointed out, he lost his faith in the predominant role of objective forces in the making of history and began to consider human ideas as more fundamental. The miscarriage of the Russian Revolution convinced him that the ultimate cause of social and cultural progress must not be traced to the economic factor. His experience of the second World War reinforced his faith in the importance of human ideas. As he became increasingly aware of the significance of human ideas and values, the concept of the class and the theory of the class struggle correspondingly lost their importance for him. The key to all social and cultural progress, he concluded, must be sought in man's own nature—his urge for freedom and reason. His faith in materialism remained unshaken and the main task before him was to reconcile the creative role of man with the philosophy of materialism. History, as Roy conceived it, is not providentially ordained, nor economically determined nor is it simply an unfoldment of the Universal Spirit. Man has the power to make as well as to mar history. "The function of a revolutionary and liberating social philosophy is to lay emphasis on the basic fact of history that man is the maker of his world—man as a thinking being, and he can be so only as an individual".<sup>1</sup> It is an attempt to build up what we may call a humanist historiology, the genealogy of which can be traced to Greek thought. Protagoras and Epicurus, two philosophers greatly adored by Roy, emphasised the human role in the making of society and these ideas were enriched by the Stoics. This trend was revived by Vico and elaborated by Helvetius, Condorcet, Michelet, by the so-called 'Utopian Socialists' and others. Roy was largely influenced by the tradition of thought upheld by these thinkers and tried to revive it as against a mechanistic view of history. His

theory did not degenerate into gross anthropocentrism since along with this emphasis on the human factor, the limitations on the power of man, determined by the material conditions of a given period, were also properly stressed.

Voltaire was the first to use the expression 'philosophy of history', but it has been used in different senses by different writers. Sometimes it refers to an inquiry about the extent and the nature of knowledge that we can derive from history in contradistinction to the knowledge that we can derive from physical nature. By 'philosophy of history' some writers refer to a cyclic theory—each cycle being divided into distinct periods—with reference to which they try to interpret the whole pattern of social development. For some thinkers such as Karl Marx philosophy of history means the attempt to find out the causal relation of historical events—a study, in other words, in historical causation. Roy applied the expression 'philosophy of history' in this last sense.

The idea of causation in history is a very old one. In the past the sole cause of all historical developments was ascribed to the Divine Providence. In Hegel the Divine Providence was replaced by a metaphysical Reason and history was conceived as a rational and orderly process under the directing force of the Absolute. Later theorists sought to replace the metaphysical Reason of Hegel by some concrete material force as the guiding factor of history. Marx discovered this guiding factor in economics and Buckle in geography. Yet others found in race the determining factor of history and Oswald Spengler discovered some quasi-biological laws regulating the rise and fall of civilisations. Roy discovered the driving force of human history in man's urges and ideas conditioned by material factors. There is therefore an element of eclecticism in his philosophy of history.

Some theorists have questioned the validity of the very concept of the philosophy of history. H. A. L. Fisher, for example, in the preface to his book *A History of Europe* writes : "One intellectual excitement has, however, been denied me. Men wiser and more learned than I have discerned in history a plot, a rhythm, a predetermined pattern. These harmonies are concealed from me. I can see only one emergency following upon another as wave follows wave, only one great fact with respect to which, since it is unique, there can be no generalisations, only one safe rule for the historian : that he should recognise in the development of human destinies the play of the contingent and

the unforeseen".<sup>2</sup> Sir Charles Oman who considers the philosophers as the enemies of history writes : "But to get to my main point—History looked at from the right point of view, is (I think) a series of happenings, not a logical process, and those who try to explain it by the popular slogans such as are inspired by the words 'Evolution' and 'Progress' are not to be trusted . . . . The fact is that History is not a tale of logical processes or necessary evolutions, but a series of happenings—some of these so startling as to deserve to be called cataclysms. One has to study these happenings with a cautious conviction that they might have happened otherwise, and that no word is so dangerous as the word 'inevitable' . . . .".<sup>3</sup> Karl R. Popper is also very much opposed to the approach of historicism. He defines it as "an approach to the social sciences which assumes that *historical prediction* is their principal aim, and which assumes that this aim is attainable by discovering the 'rhythms' or the 'patterns', the 'Laws' or the 'trends' that underlie the evolution of history".<sup>4</sup>

From the extracts quoted above it appears that the concept 'philosophy of history' is opposed mainly on two grounds. In the first place, history is not an inevitable process and there is no scope for any prophecy or prediction in it. Secondly, there is no rhythm or pattern or law or trend in history. History is thus reduced to a series of events arising casually out of accidental coincidences. This view presupposes that there is no direction in human history and its events are all unrelated with each other caused by chance factors.

Roy tried to develop his philosophy of history recognising fully that the history of man is not an inevitable or pre-determined process. But still it is possible, he believed, to discover in human history an integrating principle with reference to which different events may be related to each other and their social significance assessed. History was looked upon by Roy as a science, as a process of development. It is not, he said, "a chaotic conglomeration of fortuitous events"<sup>5</sup>—a simple chronicle of facts without any causal relation between them. The close relation between the past and the present, Roy pointed out, tends to show that social events are not arbitrary but causal-

2. H. A. L. Fisher, *A History of Europe*, p. V (Preface).

3. Sir Charles Oman, *On the Writing of History*, pp. 8-9.

4. Karl. R. Popper, *The Poverty of Historicism*, p. 3.

5. RRR, II, p. 309.

ly interlinked. "The past is to be studied for a rational explanation of the present. The discovery of a rational connection between the past and the present of the human race shows off history as an evolutionary process. Consequently, it becomes possible to deduce some general laws governing historical events", which would, Roy thought, enable us to discover "the hidden springs of human action".<sup>6</sup>

Roy's view of history as a determined process may create confusion unless the particular sense in which he used the expression is clearly explained. He used the expression 'determined process' in contradistinction to what we may call the arbitrary or the mysterious process. A determined process in his philosophy means a rational process and it is not necessarily predetermined.

Roy's views can best be explained by quoting from Von Mises on this subject. Mises argues that determinism "does not predict future events. It asserts that there is regularity in the universe in the concatenation of all phenomena".<sup>7</sup> Mises further writes: "The sciences of human action by no means reject determinism. The objective of history is to bring out in full relief the factors that were operative in producing a definite event. History is entirely guided by the category of cause and effect. In retrospect, there is no question of contingency. The notion of contingency as employed in dealing with human action always refers to man's uncertainty about the future and the limitations of the specific historical understanding of future events. It refers to a limitation of the human search for knowledge, not to a condition of the universe or of some of its parts".<sup>8</sup> Whatever has happened in the past has taken place owing to certain causes and those causes can be ascertained by human intelligence. Every event of history must be explained—that is the task of history which is different from chronology. If history were simply a record of "one emergency following upon another as wave follows wave" there would have developed no subject called history at all. Human history would have been a chaos—a standing miracle.

By describing history as a determined process Roy simply meant that all its events are caused by some factor or factors, and do not appear arbitrarily. Determinism, it may be men-

6. Ibid, I, p. 9.

7. Ludwig Von Mises, *Theory and History*, p. 81.

8. Ibid., p. 93.

tioned here, has been defined by E. H. Carr as "the belief that everything that happens has a cause or causes, and could not have happened differently unless something in the cause or causes had also been different".<sup>9</sup> According to S. W. Alexander determinism implies that "the data being what they are, whatever happens happens definitely and could not be different. To hold that it could means only that it would if the data were different".<sup>10</sup> If we can ascertain all the data working at present with their relative importance we will be able to predict the future. This is possible in some of the natural sciences but in the social sciences (including history) which deal largely with human beings—their will, aspirations and ideas—such predictions cannot be made.<sup>11</sup> There is no conflict between Roy's philosophy of history and Popper's view that the tendency to propound historical prophecies is the relic of an ancient superstition.<sup>12</sup>

The controversy between determinism and free will is an old one. It is usually held that a theory which seeks to explain human action in causal terms necessarily implies a denial of the free will of man. Roy accepted human will as the most powerful determining factor of history.<sup>13</sup> Human will in his philosophy appears to be closely related with the human urge for freedom. We have in the previous chapter explained the meaning of the human urge for freedom as formulated by Roy and its relation to the biological struggle for existence. The urge for freedom is the human will to unfold the potentialities latent within himself. Whenever an obstacle stands in the way of the unfoldment of man's potentialities, his innate will to freedom tries to overcome it and thus it forms the basic impetus

9. E. H. Carr, *What is History?* (A Pelican Book), p. 93.

10. S. W. Alexander in *Essays Presented to Ernst Cassirer*, 1936, p. 18, quoted by E. H. Carr, *Ibid.*, p. 93.

11. See the article "Social Evolution and the Dynamics of Ideas" by M. I. Sayeed in *The Humanist Way*, IV, pp. 133-147. The article is based on the ideas of M. N. Roy on the philosophy of history.

In the Synopses prepared by Roy on the eve of the Study Camp in 1946 it was stated. "History becomes a science; not indeed an exact science of the order of astronomy and physics, nor experimental like chemistry; history as a science is analogous to geology; historical knowledge is inferential; a picture of the past drawn on the basis of knowledge resulting from a study of relics, documents, inscriptions, monuments etc. assisted by philosophy, palaeontology, archaeology and other branches of investigation in circumscribed fields". (P. 13).

12. See Patrick Gardiner (ed), *Theories of History*, p. 276.

13. Principle No. 4.

to all human progress. As Roy has put it : "From time to time, the march of history is obstructed by the requirements of the established social order, which sets a limit to human creativeness, mental as well as physical. The urge for progress and freedom, born out of the biological struggle for existence, asserts itself with a renewed vigour to break down the obstacle. A new social order conducive to a less hampered unfolding of human potentialities is visualised by men, embodying the liberating ideas and cultural values created in the past. A new philosophy is born out of the spiritual heritage of mankind, to herald a reorganisation of society".<sup>14</sup>

Roy tried to reconcile the freedom of the human will and the human urge for freedom with historical determinism by taking human will itself as one of the determining factors of history. He admitted that there is a great difference between the determinism of the physical nature and the determinism of human history. The former follows mechanical laws and therefore man cannot change its course, but in the latter the human will plays a dominant part and therefore man can influence its development. But determinism can still be maintained if it is differentiated from predestination.<sup>15</sup> Human history, according to Roy, is a determined but not a pre-determined process. History is determined by various factors and human will is the most powerful of them. The role of human will is uncertain and unpredictable, and therefore the future of history is not pre-determined. If the events of life and society were pre-determined, either by Divine Providence or by mysterious economic laws, there would have been, Roy admitted, no human freedom.<sup>16</sup> But history nevertheless remains a determined process since the human will, desire and endeavour in pursuance thereof are also determined (in the sense that they are not mysterious but follow from the biological nature of man). Roy however admits that there can be no "absolute determinism" in history<sup>17</sup> which cannot be differentiated from predestination. By making man free to determine his future Roy tried to combine free will and determinism in his philosophy of history. It is interesting to note that Roy held these ideas about free will and determinism long before he developed his philosophy of

14. RRR, I, p. 14.

15. Principle No. 4.

16. RRR, II, p. 285.

17. Ibid., p. 267.

**New Humanism.** In the Jail Volumes he asked the question : "But is it correct to say that determinism, carried to the biological sciences, reduces human beings to automata ? Does physical determinism imply that man is a machine ?"<sup>18</sup> He answered : "Physical determinism is not antithetical to the idea of freedom. Freedom is denied by the doctrine of predestination".<sup>19</sup> He further observed : "Will is determined, but man is free to act as he wills. Determinism does not rob him of the freedom of action".<sup>20</sup> The philosophy of New Humanism is an elaboration of these ideas which he formed in the course of his fruitful prison life of six years.

In explaining Roy's ideas on free will and determinism we may refer again to the view of Ludwig Von Mises who makes a distinction between activistic and fatalistic determinism and observes that "activistic determinism is by no means incompatible with the rightly-understood idea of freedom of the will".<sup>21</sup> Non-human entities, Mises explains, react according to regular patterns but man's reaction is determined by his ideas, thoughts and will. Man actively determines his own destiny. Roy used the expression 'determinism' in history in the sense in which Von Mises uses the expression 'activistic determinism'.

Owing to the predominant role of man, the course of human history is uncertain. Roy observed : "At any period of history, there are many alternative possibilities of development, but that uncertainty is about the future; in the past, history has taken one of the many possible alternative sources; historiography explains why one particular course was preferred; recurrence of certain specific causes of a preference in different parts of the world allow formulation of some laws of history"<sup>22</sup>. In history there is no predetermined pattern, no rhythm or dynamism of its own independent of human will and ideas but it may still enable us to discover a general trend. If history is made by man it must be purposive, and if man is rational it will be possible to ascertain the purposes by human intelligence. The analysis of history and human nature led Roy to conclude that the main purpose of man in history is to realise his freedom.

18. Jail Volumes, VII, p. 176 (b).

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid., p. 178 (a).

21. Ludwig Von Mises, *Theory and History*, p. 177.

22. *Synopses prepared by Roy on the eve of the Study Camp in 1946*, p. 14.



Man's urge for freedom supplies human history a clear direction. This does not imply, according to Roy, a faith in continuous progress without reverse. Both progress and regression were explained by him with reference to human ideas which, in his view, as we shall later find, run in two directions.

In this connection we may refer to a criticism of Roy's philosophy of history made by Dr Sharma. He remarks : "Roy tries to explain the inevitableness of revolution on the analogy of the changes in the physical world"<sup>22a</sup>, and comments that this analogy is unjustified. Roy pointed out in unmistakable terms that history is not a pre-determined and inevitable process and he admitted, as it has been just shown, alternative possibilities of development at any given period of history. In view of such a clear assertion, Dr Sharma's criticism appears to be untenable. To justify his criticism Dr Sharma refers to a passage from Roy's book *Scientific Politics* where he said :

"Just as the rise of the temperature of a volume of water creates a commotion affecting the entire volume, just so does a human community experience a commotion whenever new forces are generated within its structure. The commotion develops and culminates according to its law which is only an extension of the law governing physical processes"<sup>22b</sup>.

This passage appears to justify Dr Sharma's criticism; but the lectures recorded in the book *Scientific Politics* were delivered by Roy in 1940 when he still regarded himself to be a Marxist. The humanist ideas of Roy must not be judged in the light of what he maintained during his Marxist day.<sup>22c</sup>

Roy made, as we have seen, a clear distinction between determinism in natural science and determinism in human history. The determining factors of history, he pointed out, are many<sup>23</sup>, and they can be divided into two qualitatively different sets of categories—physical or material and human or mental. "After the generation of ideas, the single basic current of physical events bifurcates, so to say : the biological world, on the higher level of evolution, is composed of a double process—

22a. B. S. Sharma, op. cit., p. 77.

22b. Ibid., p. 72.

22c. Even when Roy had been a Marxist he stated that there was nothing inevitable in history. (M. N. Roy, *The Future of Socialism*, p. 14). But during these days his ideas were somewhat confused and in his attempt to reconcile his own ideas with those of Marx he had sometimes to contradict himself.

23. Principle No. 5.

dynamics of ideas and succession of physical facts”<sup>24</sup>. Human history is composed of these two processes involving a multiplicity of factors interacting in an integral process. All possible kinds of material and mental factors were included in his scheme and he considered “the variables of the equation of social science” as ‘innumerable’<sup>25</sup>.

History involved this ‘dual process’ but there is a close relation between the two. Both human ideas as well as social, economic and political institutions have a common origin in man’s urge for freedom<sup>26</sup>, and each process influences the other. But the relation between them is not a causal one—one is not wholly dependent upon the other. Sometimes these two processes come so near each other that their separate and independent existence appears to be lost. As Roy put it : “The two histories, the history of thought and the history of social events, are in some periods so very intertwined that they cannot be easily disentangled. Hence the confusion about their interrelation”<sup>27</sup>. But notwithstanding this close interdependence he considered them as two separate processes. “The dynamics of ideas runs parallel to the process of social evolution, the two influencing each other mutually. But in no particular point of the process of the integral human evolution, can a direct causal relation be established between historical events and the movements of ideas”<sup>28</sup>. History, in other words, is determined by the integral interaction of both the processes and any one of them should not be treated as the fundamental. “Religious beliefs, philosophical principles, social change, economic developments of the same historical epoch are mutually influenced. But to attach primary importance to one of them and trace the origin of the rest to it is evidently wrong”<sup>29</sup>. This view thus accepts the influence of both, the social environment as well as the human ideas, in determining the course of history.

The doctrine of the two histories take both the subjective and objective factors into consideration and is a clear repudiation of all partial and one-sided theories of progress. The Carlylian tradition of interpreting history as the handiwork of

24. BC, p. 49.

25. Ibid., p. 75.

26. RRR, II, p. 287.

27. Ibid., p. 69.

28. Principle No. 6.

29. RRR, II, p. 69.

a few gifted individuals—as the biography of great men—has not yet died out. While bringing man to the centre of history it commits the error of minimising the influence of the social environment. Carlyle's theory, moreover, has a clear totalitarian significance<sup>30</sup>. Roy's humanist historiology did not incline that way. He fully understood the limitations of man and stated : "Man makes history; but his potentially unlimited creativeness is limited by the available material...."<sup>32</sup>. A revolutionary, therefore, Roy said, "must be modest; he should not aspire to make miracles"<sup>33</sup>.

At the other extreme, there is the theory of environmental determination trying to reduce the whole process of history to an institutional dialectics. This view ignores the role of man in human history and thus commits the error of playing Hamlet without the King of Denmark. Roy was opposed to what he called "Sociological historiology"<sup>34</sup>, which seeks to explain the historical evolution simply by the operation of social factors regarding the ideological process as a mere superstructure or their by-product. The influence of social factors upon the evolution of ideas is admitted, but apart from that influence, ideas have their own logic of development as well. Ideas are influenced but not wholly determined by the social factors. Man makes history and "the behaviour of human beings is determined by the autonomous movement of ideas as well as the dynamics of social evolution"<sup>35</sup>. Thus both the processes exert their influence in the making of history. "Religious doctrines and philosophical ideas", Roy wrote, "can be greatly influenced by the operation of social factors, but they are never brought about by the latter, do not originate in them. They have their own history, past and future"<sup>36</sup>. Ideologies, he said, are not superstructures but structures standing by themselves<sup>37</sup>. The humanist historiology formulated by Roy avoids the fallacies of both the extremes and tries to follow a middle course taking into account all the diverse factors of history, material as well as human.

Though Roy maintained that "equal importance is attached

30. See Sidney Hook, *The Hero in History*, p. 14.

31. RRR, I, p. 290.

32. Ibid., p. 290.

33. Ibid., II, p. 209.

34. Ibid., p. 68.

35. BC, p. 66.

36. RRR, II, p. 89.

37. BC, p. 112.

to the dynamics of ideas and dialectics of social historical development"<sup>38</sup>, his theory of history contains an unmistakable indication of the possibility of the human element ultimately asserting itself and shaping the course of history. The rise of a new ideology, he pointed out, is an essential precondition of the rise of a new social order. "It is an experience of history", he said, "that invariably a new ideology rises to herald a new social order. New ideas inspire action for the destruction of established economic relation and the creation of new ones"<sup>39</sup>. Does it not imply a causal relation between human ideas and social development? Roy admitted that in so far as ideas act as 'causative force' in social development, 'there is a relation between the movements of ideas and what we call social dynamics'<sup>40</sup>. New ideas inspire action to create a new society and therefore history is made by ideas. Human history, he pointed out, is made more by the human brain than by brawn<sup>41</sup>. Man's brain is also, he said, a means of production; it produces ideas, which are the most iconoclastic of commodities. And revolution, Roy asserted, presupposes iconoclastic ideas<sup>42</sup>. In as much as action is motivated by ideas, determinism in history, according to him, is primarily ideal<sup>43</sup>. But Roy still refused to concede any causal relation between ideas and social development possibly because he thought that in spite of their very significant role, ideas after all constitute a condition—not the cause—of social evolution. The rise of a new ideology will not necessarily signify the rise of a corresponding social order. Therefore, the relation is not a causal one.

Roy tried to reconcile the vital role of human ideas in history with the philosophy of materialism. Human ideas influence history but the ideas themselves have a physical origin. "Ideation is a physiological process resulting from the awareness of environment"<sup>44</sup>. And simple awareness is "supplemented by reactions to the things of which the organism becomes aware"<sup>45</sup>. The nervous system and the brain of the human organism serve

38. Ibid., p. 56.

39. Ibid., pp. 51-52.

40. Ibid., p. 57.

41. RRR, I, p. 13.

42. Principle No. 15.

43. RRR, I, pp. 13-14.

44. Principle No. 6.

45. RRR, I, p. 20.

as the means of inter-relation between him and his environment, and the ideas are born out of this process. Roy tried to trace the origin of ideas to the "prehuman biological impulses"<sup>46</sup>. An idea in the brain of primitive man could not, he said, possibly be distinguished from a biological impulse, and gradually with the rise of language and conceptual thought the whole process became very complex<sup>47</sup>. Roy thus rejected the theory of metaphysical origin of ideas which leads either to Idealistic Monism or Psycho-Physical-Parallelism. In spite of his recognition of the vital role of ideas he tried to maintain the position of Materialist Monism. He wrote : "Ideas are not *sui generis* metaphysical entities which somehow interject themselves into the material make-up of man; nor are they a priori ethereal forms preexisting or existing simultaneously with the events of the material world"<sup>48</sup>. Roy did not recognise the concept of the disembodied ideas or of a cosmic consciousness co-existent with the physical universe. Thus, the fundamental materialist proposition that the physical being precedes ideas remains unassailed. The recognition of the role of ideas in the making of history does not involve any dualism in the philosophical sense. These principles which form a vital part of the philosophy of New Humanism were enunciated by Roy during the period when he called himself a Marxist. He wrote in the jail : "Philosophically, I am not an idealist. But one need not believe in the metaphysical sovereignty of ideas, and yet admit that, once formed spontaneously (ideation is a physiological process) or instilled artificially into consciousness, ideas determine human action to a very large extent. Hence the decisive role of ideology in the development and ultimate success of any political or social movement"<sup>49</sup>.

Roy maintained that without an explicit recognition of the decisive role of ideas in social evolution, materialism itself cannot be defended. The social progress necessarily presupposes human action, and human action is motivated by ideas, and, therefore, if the creative role of ideas is excluded from Materialism, it would "relapse into Newtonian natural philosophy

46. Ibid., II, p. 287.

47. Ibid., I, pp. 21-22.

48. BC, p. 48.

49. M. N. Roy, *The Ideal of Indian Womanhood* (Fragments of a Prisoner's Diary. Vol. II), pp. 103-104.

which makes room even for an anthropomorphic God”<sup>50</sup>. To be self-operative matter must have motion within it—otherwise a God or a *deus ex machina* would have to be recognised. Similarly social evolution must also contain within it some factor that would serve as the driving force of history. Ideas alone can play that role, and, therefore, Roy pleaded for a ‘restatement of Materialism’<sup>51</sup> recognising the creative role of ideas. A materialist per excellence in the field of philosophy, he appeared to be more or less an idealist in his theories of history. To the extent he conceded to ideas a decisive role in history and regarded them as the master-key for interpreting the past, Roy was an idealist. But his ideas were human ideas, born in the human brain motivating human action and thus creating history. All concepts of trans-human and disembodied ideas leading ultimately to the Absolute Idea manifesting itself in the world of phenomena were considered by him as a fantasy. Discussing the Hegelian doctrine of the identity of thought and being, Roy pointed out that thought and being are co-existent only from a particular stage of the evolutionary process. Prior to the rise of life the doctrine cannot be reconciled with materialism, but after its appearance the identity of thought and being in the biological process of evolution including social evolution and history does not contradict Materialism. With this doctrine shared by both, “Idealism”, Roy maintained, “flows into Materialism”<sup>52</sup>, not in the metaphysical field but in the evolution of society and the making of history.

Though ideas have a physical origin, after they are born in human minds they attain autonomy and become an independent force. “Mind and matter”, Roy observed, “can be reduced to a common denominator, but as such, they are two objective realities”<sup>53</sup>. Born out of matter, mind becomes as real and objective a force as matter itself. Once the ideas are formed, they “exist by themselves governed by their own laws”<sup>54</sup>. Ideas have a history and a development of their own independent of the changes in society. The progress of ideas can be understood “by the logic of the evolution of thought, by the objectivity

50. RRR, II, p. 183.

51. Ibid., I, p. 11.

52. Ibid., II, p. 163.

53. BC, p. 49.

54. Principle No. 6.

of the dynamics of ideas themselves”<sup>55</sup>, apart from the changes in the society or in economic life. There is no direct relation between the rise of an ideology and the rise of any particular class, though a class may take advantage of a particular ideology for its own interests. “The relation between the growth of a new ideology and the rise of a new social class is not causal, either way; it is accidental”<sup>56</sup>. Faced with a new problem, man, led by the urge for freedom, tries to develop a new idea out of the existing store of human thoughts. A new idea, therefore, must be referred back to an old idea<sup>57</sup>. The ideas of a philosopher, for example, can better be understood as the continuation and elaboration of the ideas formulated by the philosophers of the past rather than as a superstructure upon any new social conditions. Ideas develop owing to the inner necessity felt by man and not simply owing to the impact of social and economic forces. Therefore the process of the development of ideas is described by Roy as “a process of dynamics, not of mechanics—of internal motion, not of any external impact”<sup>58</sup>. The logic of the development of ideas, he said, is not dialectical but dynamic and continuous<sup>59</sup>. This theory of the development of ideas conform neither to the Hegelian doctrine of development through conflict nor to the Marxist doctrine of economic determinism, “although”, as Roy wrote, “it does corroborate Hegel’s philosophy of history rather than that of Marx”<sup>60</sup>. Evolution of ideas by their own inner dynamism is called by Roy the Dynamics of Ideas. The dynamics of ideas, he maintained, can be traced all the way back to the great thinkers of the remotest antiquity. The development of ideas has a continuity of its own.

Roy held almost similar ideas even when he had been a Marxist. In the Jail Volumes he wrote : “There is no discontinuity in scientific knowledge. New theories, however greatly revolutionary, never repudiate older ones. New theories

55. RRR, II, p. 8.

Cf : “Ideas influence one another, they provide stimulation for the emergence of new ideas, they supersede or transform other ideas”. Ludwig Von Mises, *Theory and History*, p. 99.

56. BC, p. 52.

57. RRR, I, p. 13.

58. Ibid., p. 163.

59. Ibid., II, p. 190.

60. Ibid, I, p. 5.

may overshadow older ones but must have them as the foundation to stand upon"<sup>61</sup>. Even in those days he sometimes tried to explain the development of ideas by their own dynamics. For example, he observed: "Religion necessarily leads to theology—to futile speculative attempt to define the nature of God. Theology is futile speculation, because it can never perform the task it sets to itself. As soon as human mind can define him, God ceases to be God. Therefore the historical function of theology is to destroy religion as religion. Having destroyed its own source theology destroys itself. Consistently developed, theology culminates into pantheism. Vedantic Pantheism is the logical consequence of the theism of the Upanishads. In the pantheistic form, theology consumes itself, because consistent pantheism leads to atheism. Thus goes on the endless process of ideological development"<sup>62</sup>.

This autonomy of the world of thought was regarded by Roy as "the foundation of the spiritual (in the secular sense) freedom—the highest ideal of human existence"<sup>63</sup>. If the ideas of man were wholly determined by the environment or economic mode of production, man would have remained a slave of the latter. Man becomes free by his ability to conceive new ideas and by his attempt to change himself and the society accordingly. Roy tried to establish that man can create himself anew by overcoming the influence of the environment and thus new men must precede a new environment. The autonomous existence and dynamic development of ideas would enable man to change his ideas and thus change himself without any prior change in the environment. The assumption that man can change himself by his ideas is the essence of the humanist historiography formulated by Roy. He wrote: "It has become axiomatic that environment shapes man. But a humanist will prove that men can also shape their environment"<sup>64</sup>.

Though philosophically a materialist, Roy admitted that philosophical monism must not preclude the recognition of a plurality of factors in the making of human history. "As foundation of philosophy monism is preferable, but it would be naive to apply it", he wrote, "to the multifarious manifestations

61. *Jail Volumes*, IV, p. 93 (a).

62. *Ibid.*, III, p. 160 (a).

63. *RRR*, I, p. 222.

64. *PPP*, p. 127.



of the phenomena of life"<sup>65</sup>. He tried to harmonise monism in philosophy with pluralism in history and maintained that the monistic approach to history, whether idealist or materialist, is bound to become inadequate and partial. Monistic metaphysics, he pointed out, does not preclude pluralism in the process of becoming<sup>66</sup>, because the plural factors ultimately originate from the same source. To be dependable, historiography must take into consideration all the factors—material and human—present in a given situation.

There is no definite and predetermined way of the development of human ideas. "The dynamics of ideas", Roy observed; "though having their roots in the physical being of man, cannot be fitted into a predetermined pattern of teleological historicism"<sup>67</sup>. But, on the whole, there are two currents of human thought, one is rationalist and the other is religious. Ideas, according to Roy, develop in one of the two directions, either in the right or in the wrong way<sup>68</sup>, that is, either in the rationalist or in the religious channel. Religion itself, in his view, has its origin in the innate rationality of man and both the currents were originally expressions of man's desire to know and of his will to be free. But in the course of time religion lost its rational character and "faith was postulated as the antithesis of reason"<sup>69</sup>. The stream of human thought—both metaphysical and social—thus became bifurcated into two currents. The rationalist current which at first could be postulated only as a philosophical proposition was later on reinforced by the development of science and it supplied the impetus to man's struggle for freedom. Throughout history this current of thought expressed man's urge for freedom and it championed the cause of reason in philosophy and of individual freedom in society. The religious tradition, originally developed as a rational hypothesis, continued to linger simply as a mental habit, or rather as a superstition, even long after it had ceased to be a spiritual necessity. Human vanity could not easily cast off its own creation even when its rational basis was blasted. The religious current of thought continued to remain as an expression of man's fear of freedom

65. BC, p. 49.

66. RRR, II, p. 216.

67. Ibid., p. 137.

68. Ibid., p. 119.

69. Ibid, I, p. 106.

and stood for mysticism in philosophy and collectivism in society. The conflict between these two currents of thought, one favouring progress and the other retarding it, is, according to Roy, the basic feature of human history. He wrote : "Simultaneously with his age-long struggle for freedom, the incentive for which is a biological urge, man, in so far as he is a victim of his vanity, has all along been haunted by the fear of freedom. This contradiction between a basic biological impulse and the super-structure of a predisposition of primitive human psychology underlies the whole history of mankind and explain the dialectics of spiritual evolution"<sup>70</sup>.

Roy believed that to be fruitful, human thought must be reinforced by human will, and, therefore, in his philosophy of history he tried to reconcile reason with emotion and will. The human will in his philosophy is not a mysterious metaphysical category nor is it a blind irrational urge. It is a part of nature and grows out of the rational order. In the law-governed universe and in the rational man there is, as we have discussed in the previous chapter, no mysterious irrational element. Therefore the human will, Roy argued, cannot be anti-rational. Both reason and will grow out of the biological structure of man, and, therefore, in his opinion, they cannot stand in an antithetical relation<sup>71</sup>. The human will expresses itself in Romanticism, and Roy maintained that to be productive, romanticism must be reconciled with rationalism.

The passionate belief in the creativeness and freedom of man is, according to Roy, the essence of the romantic view of life. Romanticism "is the urge of the will of man to break all the chains that bind him in order to realise his freedom"<sup>72</sup>. It is an impetuous urge to get the desirable. Man however cannot create history simply with this urge. Along with this impetuous will to freedom man also possesses reasoning power which has a sobering effect. This reasoning power reveals to man his strength as well as his limitations. Man can make history when the romantic will to freedom is sobered by the rational considerations as to what is 'possible'. Therefore, "romanticism tempered with reason, and rationalism enlivened by the romantic spirit of adventure pave the road to successful

70. *Ibid.*, II, p. 10.

71. *Principle* No. 4.

72. *RRR*, I, p. 15.

revolutions”<sup>73</sup>. Revolution, according to Roy, is both a rational as well as a romantic concept and he held that there is no contradiction between rationalism and the romantic view of life. The human will supplies the energy and reason shows the way—one supplies dynamism and the other gives direction. Thus reason and romanticism can be fitted into a single revolutionary process.

Roy made a clear distinction between true romanticism and false romanticism. True romanticism, according to him, carries the tradition of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment<sup>74</sup>. It believes in the free development of individual personality without any divine grace and looks to the future without bemoaning the passing of the old order. Romanticism which tends to emphasise irrationalism, intuition, imagination and fantasy against rational thinking was regarded by Roy as false. Rousseau, in his opinion, was the most notable example of the upholding of false romanticism. Referring to the romantic revival in England heralded by Byron and Shelley, Roy observed: “Their romanticism was a burning faith in the creativeness of man, but it was not intellectually disciplined. The heart got the better of the head; imagination and enthusiasm were not buttressed on a solid foundation of knowledge and critical realism. Therefore, the heralds of a true romantic revival tended towards anarchism, and their magnificent revolt, expressed in sublime poetry, ended in despair”<sup>75</sup>. Romanticism, in short, to be true, must be compatible with reason.

Roy’s proposition that to be fruitful human urges must be disciplined by reason is perhaps non-controversial. K. Mannheim similarly associates man’s “will to shape history” with his “ability to understand it”<sup>76</sup>. But the use of the much-discussed word ‘Romanticism’ connotes that significant aspect of human nature which eludes the rationalist’s attempt of definition and formula. A thing is romantic when, in the words of Irving Babitt, it violates the normal sequence of cause and effect in favour of adventure<sup>77</sup>. It is “strange, unexpected, intense, superlative, extreme, unique etc.” and it “hungers for the

73. Ibid., p. 15.

74. Ibid., II, pp. 14, 16, 25, 27, 54, 64.

75. Ibid., p. 64.

76. K. Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia* (English translation, 1936), p. 236.

77. Irving Babitt, *Rousseau and Romanticism*, p. 4.

thrilling and the marvellous and is, in short, incurably melodramatic"<sup>78</sup>. Romanticism seeks to draw its inspiration from the Middle Age instead of the Renaissance—from the world of knights and chivalry, deep forests, castles and dragons. Romanticism is the expression of the various facets of non-rational aspect of human nature. It is, in the words of Reinhold Niebuhr, "an assertion of the vitalities of nature against the peril of enervation through rational discipline"<sup>79</sup>. It is the "discovery of the dishonesty of reason in its pretension of mastery over, or creation of, the vital impulses of physical life"<sup>80</sup>. Romanticism involves contradictions and ambiguities because the romanticists believe that life itself is contradictory and full of ambiguities. They stand for individual freedom but at the same time believe in Destiny. They believe in this world but also run after the transcendental. They welcome the revolution but also pine for the past. Romanticism defies rationalist calculation and analysis. In his attempt to reconcile "true romanticism" with rationalism, Roy, in fact, killed the true spirit of the romantic movement.

Roy tried to interpret modern European history since the Renaissance by the general principles formulated by him. For a clear appreciation of his philosophy of history it is necessary to refer to this interpretation, in brief outline, which is found almost exclusively in one book, *Reason, Romanticism and Revolution*.

The history of modern Europe, in Roy's analysis, is determined by two currents of thought, one originating in the Renaissance and the other in the Reformation<sup>81</sup>. The former represents rationalism and is, according to him, the source of inspiration for all libertarian movements in subsequent times. The latter

78. Ibid., pp. 4-5.

79. Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, Vol. I, p. 35.

80. Ibid., p. 36.

81. In Roy's theory of history the assumption of two currents of human thought appears to be of fundamental importance, though Dr Prakash Chandra has not referred to it in his dissertation. He has not also tried to examine Roy's interpretation of modern European history in which the conflict between the two currents of thought (the Renaissance current and the Reformation current) appeared prominently. A study of this interpretation enables one to discover the weak points of Roy's philosophy of history. Not having referred to this interpretation, Dr Prakash Chandra does not write anything in criticism of Roy's theory of history. :

continues the religious tradition and is related by him to the mysticism and collectivism of the modern period.

The Renaissance was described by Roy as a phase of man's age-long struggle for freedom. In ancient Greece a group of philosophers led by the urge for freedom and search for truth tried to explain the world in natural terms but due to the inadequacy of positive knowledge the attempt failed. The spiritual vacuum created by this failure was filled up by the religious mode of thought which dominated the human mind for a long time overshadowing the rationalist tradition. The Renaissance was a renewal of that tradition. In Roy's words, it was "the resumption of man's struggle for spiritual freedom and search for truth undertaken at the dawn of civilization, but confused and partially interrupted by the religious mode of thought which prevailed for more than a millennium"<sup>82</sup>.

The origin of the Renaissance, Roy pointed out, must be traced, not to the rise of any new social or economic force but to the rational ideas of ancient Greece and to the development of science. Although the Renaissance approximately synchronised with the rise of the trading class still there was, Roy maintained, no "causal connection" between the two, and the humanist individualism in the Renaissance was not a mere superstructure or a justification of any particular economic system<sup>83</sup>. On the basis of the authorities of the mediaeval history like Henry Pirenne, Roy pointed out that the commercial and trading activities in Europe, interrupted by the fall of the Roman Empire in the West, began to revive both in the Mediterranean and in the northern part of Europe by the end of the 9th century long before the Renaissance. Moreover, the rise of the bourgeoisie took place not only in Italy but throughout Western Europe, and the trading class entered the field of industrial production outside Italy. Flanders and Brabant were economically the most advanced areas of Europe but Italy became the centre of the Renaissance movement. If the Renaissance were the ideology of the bourgeoisie, it would not have developed in Italy. Even in Italy the Renaissance did not grow under the patronage of the bourgeoisie. The bourgeois class developed most in Genoa and Venice but their contribution to the Renaissance was very limited. The Renaissance Movement developed

82. RRR, I, p. 102.

83. *Ibid*, p. 65.

of course in Florence, a centre of trade and banking, but there it was patronised by the Medicis who belonged rather to the mediaeval aristocracy than to the rising bourgeoisie. A number of feudal tyrants of Southern Italy as well as a number of Popes rather than the bourgeoisie were great patrons of the Renaissance Movement.

The development of science was a feature of the Renaissance, but it had, Roy pointed out, no relation with the development of the means of capitalist production. Leonardo, Copernicus, Galileo and others who contributed enormously to the development of science in the Renaissance period had no relation with the rising bourgeoisie. Columbus, whom Roy mentioned as an example, found no help from the bourgeois class of his native city Genoa and was patronised by the feudal court of Spain<sup>84</sup>. The Renaissance was caused by the rational ideas and culture of ancient Greece. The scientific and rational ideas of the ancient Greek thinkers were collected, elaborated and enriched by the Arab scholars, and Italy was influenced by this Arab thought more directly than any other European country. This cultural factor can alone explain why the Renaissance began in Italy rather than in any other country of Europe. Roy, even in his Marxist days, sometimes tried to trace the origin of the Renaissance and of modern civilization to cultural rather than economic factors. For example he stated: "The positive outcome of antique culture was Alexandrian science and Epicurean philosophy—the two links which connect modern civilization with the ancient through the 15 centuries of mediaeval darkness"<sup>85</sup>.

The Reformation, in its negative aspects,—in so far as it was simply a challenge to the papal authority,—had, Roy admitted, a liberating significance. But in its positive side it ultimately revived the mediaeval tradition of religious authoritarianism and intolerance giving rise to "an alternative totalitarianism"<sup>86</sup>. Contrary to the Renaissance spirit, Luther considered man a helpless tool in the hands of Providence, having no power to change his fate. He believed in the infallibility of the Bible and not in rational understanding or individual judgement. Roy, therefore, described Luther as an "anti-Humanist

84. *Ibid.*, p. 101.

85. *Jail Volumes*, II, p. 92(b).

86. *RRR*, I, p. 139.

*par excellence*”<sup>87</sup>. Politically, according to Roy, the Reformation gave rise to nationalism and monarchical absolutism. The Reformation broke out in Germany as a revolt against the Roman supremacy and so the German princes aiming at secular power and the German clergy jealous of the Italians occupying the higher positions in the Church hierarchy supported Luther. As a result, the Reformation movement developed in close alliance with the princely order and depended entirely on its patronage. Luther sanctified the principle of the absolute power of the king as against the rights of the people, and under the influence of the Reformation the spiritual power and the temporal power were united in the Protestant princes. This made monarchical absolutism complete, and Luther justified tyranny as divine retribution for man’s sins. He thus stood for the monolithic Nation-State and prepared the ground for the ultimate rise of totalitarianism. “It was not an accident”, said Roy, “that the prophet of modern statism belonged to a Lutherean church”<sup>88</sup>. The Renaissance gave rise to the libertarian movement in Europe and the Reformation fostered the totalitarian tendency. Therefore, Roy considered the Reformation as “a set back to the age-long striving for intellectual progress and spiritual freedom”<sup>89</sup>.

There was no relation, Roy asserted, between the Reformation movement and the rising bourgeoisie. Neither the Reformation nor the Renaissance was a class ideology. In Germany the Reformation movement took a political and national character but its driving force was not the rising bourgeoisie, but, as we have just seen, the feudal princes. The Reformation, instead of serving the interest of the bourgeoisie, “reinforced Feudalism and helped the rise of the nation-state, under despotic monarchs”<sup>90</sup>. The Reformation movement was explained by Roy as essentially a continuation of the religious and theological mode of thought, though a particular class might have accepted it later in its own interest. Roy referred to the views of Max Weber and Professor Tawney who without being orthodox Marxists tried to trace the origin of the Reformation to the rise of the bourgeoisie. Their views, Roy pointed out, could at best show that Protestantism was accepted by the commercial classes in their own interest which even might have

87. Ibid., p. 125.

88. Ibid., II, p. 73.

89. Ibid., pp. 74-75.

90. Ibid., p. 71.

influenced its doctrines partly. But that does not prove any 'causal connection' between the bourgeois economy and the Protestant doctrine<sup>91</sup>. The basic principles of the protestant theology such as the nature of God and man's relation to him can be understood only with reference to the religious mode of thought of the Middle Age and must have been conceived independently of the rise of the capitalist economy.

The Renaissance and the Reformation, thus, were two currents running in opposite directions. All progressive movements of the present age were traced by Roy to the Renaissance tradition of thought and even to the earlier rational ideas. The human urge for freedom aided by the development of science led to the unfoldment of the Renaissance ideas and ideals which inspired man to reconstruct his society in order to realise his freedom more and more. All the reactionary movements of the present age were likewise traced by him to the ideas which remained under the influence of the Reformation. The ultimate driving force of history—both of progress and of reaction—was thus traced by Roy to human ideas. The present crisis of human civilization, according to him, was directly related to the Reformation or the religious mode of thought and he sought its solution by reviving the Renaissance tradition.

He tried to explain the origin of liberalism and democracy by the logic of the evolution of thought and the objectivity of ideas themselves, rather than by any economic or sociological factor<sup>92</sup>. They arose out of man's urge for freedom and the intellectual pursuit for truth and were aided by the rational trend of human thought and the development of science. He traced the origin of political liberalism to the history of revolts against the Papal absolutism and to the demand of representative institutions inside the Church raised mainly by the Conciliar Movement<sup>93</sup>. An elected General Council for an authoritative interpretation of the Divine Law, demanded by mediaeval thinkers like Marsiglio of Padua, William of Occam and others had a clear democratic significance. Roy considered the General Council as "the fore-runner of modern parliaments", and pointed out that "those highly significant political results fol-

91. Ibid., p. 68.

92. Ibid., p. 80.

93. Ibid., p. 73.



lowed from the purely intellectual struggle for the freedom of enquiry and judgement inside Christian society"<sup>94</sup>. After combatting Papal absolution the same human urge gave rise to Democracy and Liberalism by challenging the monarchist centralism. The ideas expressed by Marsiglio in 'Defensor Pacis' were considered by Roy as the 'basic principles of the parliamentary democratic system', enunciated at a time when 'the bourgeoisie were hardly out of their swaddling clothes'<sup>95</sup>.

Apart from the influence of these ideas which have their roots in the past, liberal and democratic thought contained, Roy said, "entirely new elements"<sup>96</sup> drawn from the development of science. It was Hobbes who tried to formulate a completely secular political philosophy on the basis of the evidence supplied by science and that was the reason why Roy held that "the philosophic foundation of liberalism was laid by Hobbes"<sup>97</sup>. After Hobbes, Locke appeared as the greatest philosopher of liberalism but with Locke, Roy maintained, liberalism began to decline.

Like its rise, the decline and fall of liberalism also had no direct relation with capitalism. The decline of liberalism was traced by Roy to the development of ideas in the wrong direction. Locke was a great philosopher of liberalism but in his philosophy he inherited elements both from the Renaissance as well as from the Reformation, and therefore from his time liberalism became "philosophically confused"<sup>98</sup>. Locke inherited the Renaissance tradition from Hobbes, but he was also largely influenced by Hooker, and to that extent Locke continued the mediaeval tradition. And the decline of liberalism was traced by Roy to the influence of this tradition. He admitted the influence of capitalist economy upon the liberal thought of the 19th century, but the "fundamental cause" of the decline of liberalism was sought by him in its deviation from the original principles of rationalism and individualism, and this was due to "the ambiguities and contradictions" inherent in the philosophy of Locke<sup>99</sup>. Instead of being a rationalist of the tradition of Hobbes, Locke was an empiricist, and his empiricism

94. Ibid., p. 84.

95. Ibid., I, p. 149.

96. Ibid., II, p. 87.

97. Ibid., p. 88.

98. Ibid., p. 227.

99. Ibid., pp. 104-5.

ultimately and also logically ushered in the philosophy of irrationalism which brought philosophy back to religion. Berkeley and Hume developed the philosophy of irrationalism inherent in Locke, and the decline of liberalism was traced by Roy to this line of thought. Locke's empiricism put a clear limit to the range of human knowledge. Man cannot know anything beyond what he can derive from sense perception. It was an admission of the impossibility of metaphysics—impossibility of rational human knowledge beyond a particular stage. In order to explain that realm of ignorance and thus to escape the position of solipsism God was reintroduced in philosophy by Berkeley. Hume's empiricism and agnosticism also led to the same result. Accepting Locke's view that the impressions ultimately constitute the sole content of the human mind (with no causal connection between them), Hume, carrying the principle of empiricism to its logical consequence, rejected the inductive method and the doctrine of the Natural Law. The former is the method of natural science and the latter provided the philosophical sanction of the democratic rights of the individuals. Hume's philosophy thus by implication led to the rejection of science and reason as well as democracy. In his empiricist philosophy the criterion of judgement or value was not reason but utility, and therefore Roy agreed with Russell that the growth of unreason in the 19th and 20th centuries was the natural sequel to the ideas of Hume<sup>100</sup>. Under the influence

100. The following passage written by Roy in the Jail Volumes criticising the views of Hume will clearly show the underlying unity of his thought during the two periods. He wrote : "Without the concept of causal relation rationalist thought is not possible. If regular sequence of physical phenomena does not imply necessity then general laws cannot be inferred from them. So, scientific research is also an impossibility or a senseless undertaking. The rejection of the concept of causal relations in nature logically implies repudiation of the mechanistic view. The world is not a cosmos ; it is a chaos in which all sorts of magic and miracle may happen. Regularities actually observed in such a world must be regarded as inscrutable mysteries. Hume's critique of causality takes philosophy back to religion and teleology. The world is not explained by the statement that it is as it is because of the regular sequence of physical phenomena. That's no rationalism. Human mind demands to know why certain type of events regularly follows another specific type. If the explanation is not found in causal relation, on the background of identity, then the appeal to some supernatural agency, to a metaphysical purposiveness is inevitable." *Jail Volumes*, VII, pp. 104(b)—105(a).

of such thoughts liberalism broke away from secularism and became identified with pantheism. In the context of the transcendental and teleological system of thought, the liberal doctrine of individual liberty was bound to become vulgarised in practice. Roy considered the doctrine of providential order as inconsistent with the liberal principle of human freedom. "Once it is admitted", he argued, "that the world is a providential order, the idea of man's liberty becomes meaningless"<sup>101</sup>, and one must accept the present social order with all its evils as providentially ordained. Thus liberalism appeared to provide a moral justification for the economic exploitation of man by man and served the purpose of rising capitalism. The utilitarian doctrine of the greatest good to the greatest number further prepared the ground for the rise of totalitarianism because it "logically justifies suppression of a minority even of forty-nine (because 51 is a greater number) and thus keeps the door open to dictatorship"<sup>102</sup>. Thus, Roy concluded that dictatorial and collectivist theories resulted from the utilitarian degeneration of liberalism. This degeneration made it possible for liberalism to enter into alliance with the Hegelian theory of state authoritarianism through Green and Bosanquet<sup>103</sup>. By adopting Bosanquet's mystic concept of the state, "Liberalism", according to Roy, "killed Democracy and committed suicide"<sup>104</sup>, creating conditions favourable for the rise of totalitarianism. Thus the decay of liberalism was traced by Roy not primarily to any socio-economic factor but to the logical unfoldment of the religious ideas inherent in the philosophy of Locke.

The Renaissance gave rise to the modern rationalist philosophy and made it independent of theology. Modern philosophy is usually considered to have begun with Rene Descartes (1596-1650) and he represented very largely the tradition of the Renaissance. In Descartes' philosophical thought there are, Roy pointed out, two distinct tendencies—one is the tendency of scientific thinking and another of rationalist metaphysical speculation<sup>105</sup>. His scientific thinking was a legacy of the Renaissance, and it was enriched by the epoch-making discoveries of scientists like Copernicus, Kepler and Galileo. The Cartesian

101. RRR, II, p. 230.

102. Ibid., p. 126.

103. Ibid., p. 104.

104. Ibid., p. 122.

105. Ibid., I, p. 169.

method of doubting everything struck at the root of theology and started the process of liberating the human intelligence from the bondage of tradition and authority, but his dualist philosophy, the notion of psycho-physical parallelism and the postulate of a "rational soul" in man continued the tradition of mediaeval religious thinking. The presence of contradictory elements in his ideas was not unnatural, because, growing out of the background of previous thought (not a new superstructure upon a new economy), modern philosophy could not all on a sudden give up all mediaeval influence. Roy believed that the Cartesian dualism arose mainly owing to the "uneven development of science"<sup>106</sup>. By the time of Descartes, physics and mathematics had made considerable progress but biology and psychology lagged behind. The laws of physics could not be applied to the human mind, and, therefore, Descartes formulated his dualist philosophy. The progress of biology and psychology enabled theorists subsequently to abandon the dualist philosophy and enrich the rationalist viewpoint. In accordance with the principle of the dynamics of ideas the two distinct trends in the philosophy of Descartes were developed in two different directions, one carrying the tradition of the Renaissance and another of the Reformation. The scientific tendency gave rise to the French Enlightenment and the metaphysical tendency culminated in the Monistic Idealism of Hegel. The point Roy tried to emphasise was that the modern philosophy was the outcome of continuous development of the rationalist trend of human thought enriched by the development of science. It was not the ideology of the rising bourgeoisie.

Modern philosophy, born of the Renaissance, pushed human thought towards the Enlightenment. The rationalist trend of Locke's ideas, reinforced by greater knowledge of science, gave rise to the philosophy of this age. In the eighteenth century the knowledge of the physical world was reinforced by a considerable volume of knowledge about the plants and animals including anatomy and physiology of the human body, and on the basis of this knowledge of biology and psychology a group of scientific thinkers solved the problem of the human mind by merging psychology into physiology. The advances in biology and psychology explained the nature of man and his special attributes, and, therefore, in the philosophy of the

106. *Ibid.*, p. 167.

Enlightenment the role of man in shaping his own destiny was fully recognised. Romanticism was absent in the rationalist philosophy of the previous period but it became a prominent feature of the philosophy of the Enlightenment. Reason and romanticism came together clearing the way for revolution. Roy wrote : "The eighteenth century was the age of reason in alliance with romanticism. The Enlightenment was the result of that alliance. Therefore, it was the fecundest period of modern history"<sup>107</sup>.

According to Roy's analysis the French Revolution was ideally determined. It was not caused simply by social conditions—royal despotism and economic exploitation. Tradition was the only effective defence of the Old Regime and the Enlightenment by liberating the human mind from the influence of tradition brought about the revolution. The nobility and the clergy, the twin pillars of the monarchy, were influenced by the ideas of the new philosophy and that was why the old Regime collapsed practically without much resistance. The French Revolution, in his analysis, was directly linked up with the Renaissance ideas. The Renaissance brought about a revolt against the religious mode of thought and the application of its ideas led to a revolution against the Old Regime, sanctified by the divine right of the king to rule. Therefore, Roy concluded: "The Great Revolution was a sequel of the Renaissance—the revolt of man against God"<sup>108</sup>. He mentioned that the driving force of the French Revolution cannot ultimately be traced to the rise of the new bourgeois class. The bourgeoisie, he pointed out, did not require a revolution to come to power. The policy of Richelieu and the Grand Monarch virtually deprived the feudal nobility of all power (though they continued to enjoy the privileges) and the members of the bourgeois class were gradually absorbed in the administration.

While the Enlightenment was an echo of the Renaissance, Rousseau, according to Roy, belonged to the tradition of the Reformation. In opposition to the scientific naturalism of the eighteenth century, Rousseau placed faith in God above all rational argumentation and thus struck at the very root of rationalism. His crusade against science and progress and his "unhistorical judgement of civilization" was, in his opinion, due

107. Ibid., II, p. 66.

108. Ibid., II, p. 255.

to the Calvinist prejudice<sup>109</sup>. In so far as Rousseau was a rebel against reason, he was considered by Roy as the prophet not of the Great Revolution but of the post-revolutionary reaction. Rousseau's doctrine of the General Will, Roy pointed out, had a clear totalitarian implication. Instead of strengthening individual freedom and consolidating democracy, it laid the foundation of the metaphysical and organic conception of the State. Rousseau's distinction between the will of all and the General Will was accepted and elaborated by Hegel paving the way for the rise of totalitarianism. Roy discovered a logical link between the ideas of Rousseau and "the anti-democratic crusaders of the twentieth century"<sup>110</sup>. He did not however deny the contribution of Rousseau to the French Revolution but he played that role, according to Roy, not by his anti-rationalist views but by popularising the doctrine of the Social Contract. Summing up his role Roy wrote that he "gave a purely emotional expression to the spirit of the age without himself imbibing it intellectually"<sup>111</sup>.

Two divergent thought-currents, one of the Enlightenment carrying the tradition of the Renaissance and the other of Rousseau continuing the spirit of the Reformation, tried to influence the course of the French Revolution in two different directions. The former group preferred the revolution to develop in an orderly, democratic and rational manner and the other group followed a violent method laying emphasis on emotion at the cost of reason. At the initial stage, the revolution made orderly progress owing to the defection of the clergy under the influence of the Enlightenment. The Girondists, according to Roy, represented the spirit of the Enlightenment, and they, therefore, naturally came in conflict with the followers of Rousseau. The degeneration of the Revolution into the Reign of Terror was traced by him to the "spirit of Rousseau personified by Robespierre"<sup>112</sup>. Robespierre, described by Roy as "the real evangelist of Rousseau's gospel", defeated the Girondists and created "a vehicle for the operation of the General Will, which would force everybody to be free"<sup>113</sup>. In order to wipe out the cult of Reason, the legacy of the Renaissance and the Enlighten-

109. Ibid., p. 274.

110. Ibid., p. 272.

111. Ibid., p. 266.

112. Ibid., p. 282.

113. Ibid., pp. 283, 286.

ment, Robespierre, true to the ideas of his master, established the worship of the Supreme Being. Thus, two different sets of ideas influenced the history of the French Revolution in two different directions.

In the post-revolutionary period also human thought continued to run in two different channels and the tradition of the Reformation gave rise to both Fascism and Marxism, characterised by Roy as 'twins of Irrationalism'. The post-revolutionary romantic movement in France and Germany was, in Roy's analysis, fostered under the banner of revolt against reason raised by Rousseau<sup>114</sup>. Roy referred to this movement as a movement of 'reactionary romanticism' in contradistinction to 'true romanticism' which is consistent with reason. In France this movement was represented by Royer-Collard, Madame de Stael, Joseph de Maistre, Louis de Bonald, Victor Cousin and others and all of them were spiritual descendents of Rousseau. This reactionary romantic movement could not make much headway in France because her intellectual life was profoundly influenced by the philosophy of the Enlightenment but it found a very favourable atmosphere in Germany.

The average German mind, Roy pointed out, was not psychologically prepared to accept the rational culture of the French Enlightenment. Conquered by revolutionary France, German nationalism arose in opposition to the ideas and ideals of the French Revolution, and, therefore, it could not accept the rational culture of the French Enlightenment<sup>115</sup>. As a result, the ideas of Rousseau which were opposed to the Enlightenment became popular in Germany. Moreover, Germany was the centre of the Reformation, and, therefore Rousseau's ideas which were in conformity with the Reformation tradition, found in that country a congenial atmosphere. Cultural life of Germany thus remained under the dominant influence of the ideas of the Reformation and of Rousseau, and, according to Roy, Fascism was the logical outcome of this cultural atmosphere. Kant, Hegel and Fichte continued the same tradition, and Fichte's doctrine, Roy observed, continued "the quintessence of Fascism", though it was formulated at a time "when capitalism was still in its adolescence and the spectre of communism had not yet appeared even in the imagination of Marx"<sup>116</sup>. The tradition

114. *Ibid.*, II, p. 1.

115. *Ibid.*, p. 50

116. *Ibid.*, p. 228.

of Fichte was fanatically continued by Friedrich Ludwig John who, Roy wrote, anticipated not only Hegel, but Hitler also and stood for racial purity and regarded the Germans as the only pure race. This led Roy to conclude that the tradition of the Nazis was more than a hundred years old. Thus Roy concluded that "Fascism was neither a class ideology nor economically determined". Its basis was "not economic but emotional—irrationalism cultivated in the atmosphere of a philosophical reaction"<sup>117</sup>. The Reformation, Rousseau's ideas, German Romanticism, Fascism—these are several parts of one single process of human thought. And human thought determined history.

Marxism and Fascism were placed by Roy almost in the same category. Trying to combine dialectics (however materialistic it might be) with the romanticism of Rousseau, Marx, according to him, became a prophet of irrationalism. Dialectics made human history an inevitable process independent of the human will. But in the field of revolutionary activity Marx stood for the most extravagant form of romanticism—a heritage of Rousseau. Dialectical rationalism and extravagant romanticism could not be combined, and that made Marxism an irrational cult. "Marxism", Roy continued, "is an attempted synthesis between the two apparently antithetical view of life—the rationalist and the romantic"<sup>118</sup>, but Marx failed in this attempt. The dialectical view by making history an inevitable process "emasculated his romantic passion", and his romanticism by laying too much emphasis on revolutionary action "tipped the scale on the side of irrationalism"<sup>119</sup>. His romanticism, in other words, was not sobered by reason, and his rational-dialectical view of history precluded romanticism. "The result was that reason and romanticism cancelled each other, and Marxism became a cult of collective irrationalism"<sup>120</sup>. In spite of its irrational character, Marxism, Roy pointed out, contained some features of great liberating significance. As a materialist thinker, Marx was at least partially influenced by the Renaissance tradition. Moreover, in spite of all its fallacies, contradictions and dangers, Marxism has a moral appeal, and Roy believed that Marx influenced contemporary history more by this moral appeal. "Without a moral fervour of the highest degree, with-

117. *Ibid.*, pp. 239, 40.

118. *Ibid.*, I, p. 16.

119. *Ibid.*, II, pp. 223, 209.

120. *Ibid.*, p. 223.



out an intense dislike for injustice, he could not," Roy pointed out, "undertake the lone fight to improve the lot of the oppressed and exploited"<sup>121</sup>. Roy maintained that as an advocate of social justice, Marx was more a humanist than a Hegelian<sup>122</sup>. Thus though he condemned Fascism and Marxism as "the twins of irrationalism", he made a distinction between them. Fascism was "the more unreservedly irrational cult"<sup>123</sup>, which, unlike Marxism, contained no libertarian element to inspire man's future struggle for freedom.

The present crisis of human civilization, according to Roy, is the outcome of the irrational trend of human thought. This trend was strengthened by the discovery of physics that the atom was not the ultimate unit of matter. Psychology also discarded the old rational concept of man. This raised doubts about scientific naturalism and gave rise to philosophical speculations challenging the assumptions of Materialism. All these philosophical thoughts were condemned by him as "rationalised religion" and 'a neo-mysticism, claiming the authority of science'—an "expression of man's loss of faith in himself"<sup>124</sup>. The old irrational current of human thought, fortified by philosophical deductions (wrongly made, according to Roy) from recent developments of science, produced the crisis of our time. It was a new flare-up in the age-long struggle between religion and science. Man can overcome this crisis only by reviving the Renaissance spirit.

In the post-revolutionary period the tradition of the Renaissance was not entirely extinguished. Under the impact of the French Enlightenment there arose, "the belated German Renaissance", known as the *Aufklaerung*, dominated by towering persons like Herder, Goethe and Schiller<sup>125</sup>. This movement inherited the philosophical tradition of liberalism which was further enriched in Germany by the Young Hegelians, such as, David Strauss and Feuerbach<sup>126</sup>. In England the tradition of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment was carried on by a group of thinkers such as Jeremy Bentham, Thomas Paine, James Mackintosh and Mary Woolstonecraft. Roy placed William

121. NH, p. 18.

122. RRR, II, p. 217.

123. Ibid., p. 223.

124. Ibid., pp. 257, 259.

125. Ibid., pp. 44-45.

126. Ibid., p. 233.

Godwin in the same category whose ideas, influenced by the Encyclopedists as well as the moralists of the earlier time, such as Mably and Morelly, transcended the limits of liberalism and turned towards communism. Godwin found that the institution of private property was at the root of all social evils, and, therefore, in order to realise real individual freedom in society his vision was turned upon a communist social order. "A consistent elaboration of liberalism, Godwin's philosophy clearly pointed towards socialism. In him, the ideology of the bourgeoisie logically evolved into the revolutionary philosophy of the proletariat, proving that the characterisation of neither is true"<sup>127</sup>. Driven by the urge for freedom human ideas passed from liberalism and democracy to socialism. Liberalism was based upon the principle of individual freedom but it was not actually realised in liberal practice, and, therefore, socialist ideas were conceived. Roy agreed with Bernstein's characterisation of socialism as liberalism organised<sup>128</sup>. He, therefore, concluded: "The movement of thought from democracy to socialism was not dialectical but continuous. The incentive was the age-long human quest for freedom"<sup>129</sup>. Marxism did not belong to the tradition of this liberal socialism. As between "Utopian" Socialism and the so-called "Scientific" Socialism Roy sympathised with the former which was hailed by him as an echo of the Renaissance<sup>130</sup>.

The present crisis of human civilization, according to Roy, is, as we have already pointed out, due to the preponderance of the irrational trend of human thought represented by Fascism, Marxism and other collectivist social theories. As a remedy to it he evolved a new social philosophy reviving the traditions of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment and adjusting them to the condition of the twentieth century. That was, in his estimate, the significance of the philosophy of New Humanism.

The main charge that can be brought against the historiography of Roy—as it is revealed from a study of his interpretation of European history since the Renaissance—is its oversimplification. In this interpretation we find an attempt to formulate a comprehensive theory of history taking all the different factors into account, material as well as human. But while actually

127. Ibid., p. 101.

128. NH, p. 19.

129. RRR, II, p. 194.

130. *The Marxian Way*, II, p. 182.

interpreting the history of modern Europe from Renaissance to the present crisis, Roy sought to formulate a neat and precise formula and tried to explain the variegated process of historical evolution with reference to it. An impartial observer would find the facts and developments of history too complex to be comprehended by his neat formula. Sir Charles Oman writes about Marx and others that they have a world perspective "but a perspective entirely settled and circumscribed by their personal predispositions and theories, rather than by a true and unprejudicated survey of all the historical evidence that was available for them"<sup>131</sup>. Roy also may be accused of the same charge.

The whole history of modern Europe, according to Roy, is a history of the struggle between the Renaissance spirit and the Reformation spirit. It is a struggle between science and religion, materialism and transcendentalism, rationalism and mysticism. One represents man's urge for freedom and the other his fear of freedom. He placed the ideas of all the leading philosopher, in either of the two camps. The division was as complete and precise as the Marxist division between revolution and counter-revolution. Only the struggle has got an ideological instead of an economic basis. The attempt to distinguish two clearly demarcated processes in the evolution of modern history is too mechanical to fit in with the facts of real life. There are many who cannot legitimately be placed in any of these two groups. A deeply religious man, Erasmus, for example, cannot be grouped with the sensuous artists of the Renaissance nor obviously with the intolerent and dogmatic sect of the Luthereans. "The career and personality of Erasmus", Crane Brinton rightly remarks, "indeed fit in poorly with a cut-and-dried formula for either Renaissance or Reformation"<sup>132</sup>. A simplified concept of human nature led Roy to discover a simplified process of historical development. But as human nature is much more complicated than what he imagined it to be so is the history of man.

Roy's view that rationalism and materialism stand for democracy, and religion leads to collectivism is too sweeping a generalisation to stand the test of critical examination. He believed that obedience to God led man to submit to absolute

131. Sir Charles Oman, *On the Writing of History*, p. 84.

132. Crane Brinton, *Ideas and Man—The Story of Western Thought*, p. 260.

monarchs in the terrestrial world also, and liberation from divine tutelage paved the way for the rise of democracy and individual freedom. The pioneers of the Renaissance, the fountain-head, according to Roy's philosophy, of all democratic and libertarian movements of the present age, were no democrats and had no respect for common man. There was no greater advocate of the cause of common man than Rousseau, who, in Roy's opinion, inherited the tradition of the Reformation and heralded the modern totalitarianism. In the Middle Age when political ideas had a religious foundation there was the conception of a Natural Law or Moral Law restricting at least in theory the power of the terrestrial rulers. With the Renaissance this restriction largely disappeared, and Machiavelli introduced the spirit of the Renaissance to the field of political theory. Machiavellism was thus the result of the triumph of the human authority over the divine in the Renaissance period. In order to substantiate his point of view Roy tried to justify Machiavelli, and wrote, without giving any explanation whatever, that he was a humanist and as such a cosmopolitan<sup>133</sup>. Referring to this evaluation of Machiavelli by Roy Dr V. P. Verma rightly observed: "It is surprising that to Machiavelli, with his intensely perverse and pessimistic concept of human nature, Roy in his enthusiasm should have ascribed a humanist and a cosmopolitan character"<sup>134</sup>.

Hobbes was another great materialist thinker who discussed the problems of the state and government without any theological bias. His theory gave rise to the 'Leviathan'—an all-powerful secular authority having full control over the individuals. To justify the proposition that materialism favours individual freedom Roy tried to interpret Hobbes as an advocate of democracy<sup>135</sup>. The theory of Hobbes may contain certain liberal and democratic elements but the main purpose of the Leviathan was certainly not to promote individual freedom and democracy. Hobbes's theory only proves that the abolition of the divine right of Kings and its replacement by the secular theory of sovereignty may, instead of promoting democracy, usher in an era of autocracy. Friedrich Nietzsche, the philosopher of Master Morality and Will to Power, was hailed by Roy as the personification of the new Renaissance presumably be-

133. RRR, I, p. 82.

134. V. P. Verma, *Modern Indian Political Thought*, p. 662.

135. RRR, II, pp. 89-92.

cause of his denunciation of Nationalism and Christianity. Roy called Nietzsche a humanist and interpreted his Dyonisian culture as man's urge for freedom"<sup>136</sup>. The philosophy of Nietzsche may also be interpreted as an anticipation of tyrants like Hitler and Stalin, and Will Durant has with ample justification characterised him as "the child of Darwin and the brother of Bismarck"<sup>137</sup>. The division between materialism and freedom (the Renaissance ideal) on the one side and religion and totalitarianism (the Reformation ideal) on the other put Roy in an extremely illogical position. In spite of its materialism Marxism has given rise to totalitarianism. Among the champions of democracy and individual freedom there are many persons with deep religious convictions, such as, Mahatma Gandhi and Leon Tolstoy.

The logical foundation of the above dichotomy appears to be unsound in itself. In the previous chapter we have mentioned that according to Roy faith in religion was incompatible with the sovereignty of man. Religion makes man an instrument in the hands of the Providence and so how can he be free? Human freedom, therefore, in Roy's opinion, was conditional upon the liberation of man from the clutches of religion. That was why he made materialism an indispensable condition of freedom. The Renaissance ideal proclaimed the freedom of the individual, but did the development of science and the philosophy of materialism reinforce the dignity of the individual so ceremoniously proclaimed by the Renaissance? Science gave enormous power in the hands of man but man lost his inherent sacredness. Man became no more significant than an accidental by-product of a mechanical process of cosmic evolution. Religious philosophy gave man a privileged position—he represented the divine force. Instead of restricting his freedom it gave man supreme self-confidence. The divine character of man supplied a philosophical basis for human brotherhood and cooperation, favouring thus the cause of democracy and mutual social relations. The philosophy of Materialism dislodged man from that position and he was reduced to a machine. Science gave man power but he ceased to remain sacred. Human relation tended to become more and more mechanical divorced from ethics. And power without ethics

136. Ibid., pp. 245-47.

137. Will Durant, *The Story of Philosophy* (Cardinal Edition), Pocket Books, Inc., New York, p. 401.

has given rise to the present crisis when human civilization itself is being threatened with destruction by power acquired by man. The remedy must possibly be sought in a new system of rationalistic ethics, as Roy pointed out, but it is doubtful whether this new system of ethics can be traced to the Renaissance. Roy maintained that the men of the Renaissance replaced the Christian ascetic morality by a new standard of ethics, but this view appears to be rather untenable. About the humanists of the Renaissance Italy Burckhardt wrote: "... they substituted for holiness—the Christian ideal of life—the cult of historical greatness. It is easy to understand how easily they could view as negligible the very faults despite which the great had become great"<sup>128</sup>. The Renaissance is associated with the cult of amorality and the present civilization—the product of the Renaissance—suffers from a crisis which, according to Roy, is essentially moral in nature. The Enlightenment—the echo of the Renaissance—ushered in a tradition of political practice which was not an unmixed blessing for mankind. The Enlightenment philosophers believed in the inherent goodness of man and in the efficacy of reason, and they tried to create an environment favourable for human progress and happiness. All of them were not democrats and many including Voltaire stood for a benevolent despotism. They analysed the present in order to create a better future but had little respect for the past. They wanted to create the society *de novo* on the basis of certain rational principles ignoring fully the historical traditions and customs which the present inherits from the past. They were inspired by a messianic spirit—a new society must be created on the basis of the principles enunciated by the philosophers. Edmund Burke was not a reactionary when he pointed out the dangers of the attempt to 'change the entire fabric of the social order at a time and his plea for slow gradual changes in conformity with social traditions and customs did not simply serve 'the most unromantic purpose of providing conservatism with a philosophy'<sup>129</sup>. It is true, as Crane Brinton has pointed out, that although the leaders of the Enlightenment wanted to change the social environment root and branch, they did not visualise that the destruction would take such a violent

128. Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance of Italy*. (A Mentor book, published by The New American Library), p. 303.

129. RRR, II, p. 62.

course. They foresaw the French Revolution but not a Reign of Terror<sup>140</sup>. But Burke tried to point out that the Reign of Terror was the natural result of the attempt to effect too big changes in society in a short time. And history has vindicated Burke. The mechanical view of the human society which justified attempts to reconstruct it anew on the basis of some abstract theories led to chaos and anarchy and to the Reign of Terror. Burke's emphasis on the complexity of social structure and the continuity of social progress was after all a voice of prudence. In spite of Burke's conservatism one must appreciate his wisdom in this respect.

M. N. Roy formulated his principles of historiology as an alternative to the Marxist interpretation of history. Karl Marx's economic interpretation of history was rightly considered by him as antagonistic to human freedom, as logically fallacious, historically untenable and self-contradictory. It is antagonistic to human freedom because it seeks to interpret human history as an inevitable process determined by the economic mode of production to which man must adjust himself willingly or unwillingly. "If everything is determined economically", Roy argued, "how can man make history at all? Events will follow, one after another; man has nothing to do with them. He is a mere marionette in the hand of the Economic Providence"<sup>141</sup>. The economic determinism of Karl Marx was interpreted by Roy as "Hegelianism applied to human history" only substituting the "World Spirit" by "Economic force"<sup>142</sup>.

The doctrine of economic determinism suffers, Roy said, from the fallacy of *regresso ad infinitum*. Marx explained the evolution of society with reference to the economic mode of production, but "who created the first means of production and how<sup>143</sup>?", asked Roy. An idea in the brain must have preceded the creation of the original means of production. The economic means of production cannot be the starting point of social evolution because man did not appear on earth with it. The starting point of social evolution must be sought in man himself—in his

140. Crane Brinton, *The Shaping of the Modern Mind* (A Mentor book. This book is a reprint of the concluding half of the author's *Ideas and Men*), p. 126.

141. RH, p. 1.

142. RRR, II, pp. 202, 203.

143. Ibid., p. 285.

brain "which was not produced by man but inherited from his animal ancestry"<sup>144</sup>. With his brain man created the first means of production and the gradual development of the means of production can be explained only by new thoughts and ideas. Dr Prakash Chandra has very aptly described Roy's view thus : "As the economic determinism cannot be traced beyond the stage at which the foundation of economic life was just being laid, the origin of ideas is to be discovered outside the economic process. It is to be noted that before man became a social being, he was a physical being"<sup>145</sup>. Marxism instead of recognising the role of human ideas behind the origin and development of the means of production considered them as the superstructure upon the latter.

Karl Marx, on the basis of his theory of economic determinism, predicted the future course of human society, but history refused to oblige him. The Russian Revolution itself, Roy pointed out, "does not fit into the Marxist scheme of revolution"<sup>146</sup>. He observed : "If proletarian revolution was to develop according to the Marxist prognosis, it should have happened first in an industrial country like England, rather than in a backwater of the modern world. The Russian Revolution was an accident—the result of a fortuitous combination of circumstances. As such, it was itself a negation of the mechanical view of historical determinism"<sup>147</sup>. Soon after "the unhistorical victory" of the proletarian revolution in Russia, it failed in Germany "where it ought to have triumphed if Marx was not a false prophet"<sup>148</sup>. The Marxist prediction about the future of the middle class in capitalist society and the Marxist theory of the inevitable replacement of Capitalism by Socialism have also been falsified by history<sup>149</sup>.

Marxism was further denounced by Roy as a self-contradictory philosophy. Marx advocated armed insurrection in order to destroy capitalism and to bring about a new social order but at the same time he considered the collapse of capitalism and the rise of socialism as inevitable. "If the decay and disappearance of any social system was inevitable, a violent revolution for

144. BC, p. 104.

145. Dr Prakash Chandra, *op. cit.*, p. 163.

146. RR, p. 200.

147. NH, p. 10.

148. RRR, II, p. 222.

149. NH, pp. 26, 16.



its overthrow was palpably unwarranted. Conversely, if the change had to be brought about by force, it was not inevitable. Because it could be prevented by the use of superior force"<sup>150</sup>.

Roy was critical of the Marxist doctrine of class struggle also. Without denying the struggle between classes in the society Roy discarded the Marxist *theory* of class struggle—the idea that the class struggle is the lever of all progress in society. If class struggle is the only way to social progress, a classless society or communism would, Roy argued, inevitably mean a stagnant society<sup>151</sup>. He expressed his view about classes and class struggle thus : “Society undoubtedly was always divided into classes, and the classes had conflicting interests. But at the same time, there was a cohesive tendency, which held society together. Otherwise, it would have disintegrated, time and again, and there would be no social evolution”<sup>152</sup>.

Roy's criticism of the Marxist interpretation of history was thorough and reasonable but the abiding contribution of Marxism to the field of historical investigation cannot be denied. The positive contribution of Marxian sociology was to emphasise the influence of socio-economic factors upon the development of human ideas and history, though in his zeal to combat idealism Marx went to an extreme position. As a general principle, Roy admitted the importance of both, human ideas and social factors, for history, but while applying it to modern history his interpretation, as it is found in his *Reason, Romanticism and Revolution*, tended to ignore or at least minimise the role of sociological factors.

150. RRR, II, p. 204.

151. BC, p. 64.

152. NH, p. 26.

## SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC DOCTRINES

In conformity with the basic ideas of the philosophy of New Humanism, Roy sought to reconstruct the political and economic institutions of society in order to give the individuals controlling power over them. He analysed the existing institutions and systems and found them all collectivist in nature depriving the individuals of effective power to control them. Roy therefore tried to draw the picture of a new pattern of social organisation based on individual freedom and mutual co-operation, and developed certain doctrines in favour of such a society.

The theory of sovereignty is the basic principle of any system of political thought. In his Marxist days Roy believed in the principle of the sovereignty of the people which is the corner-stone of modern democracy. In the draft of the Indian Constitution prepared by him in 1944 it was stated: "All authority emanates from the people"<sup>1</sup>. But in spite of this categorical statement it is doubtful whether during that period he accepted the basic principle of democracy, namely, equal rights for all. In the chapter on 'The Declaration of Rights and Fundamental Principle' of this above draft, freedom of press and speech was guaranteed to all "but the enemies of the people"<sup>2</sup>. Moreover, the right of association was guaranteed "for the purpose of safe-guarding and amelioration of economic conditions and the political status of workers, employees and peasants"<sup>3</sup> only. Roy characterised his Radical Democratic Party as the Peoples' Party, championing the cause of the people, workers, employees and peasants, and, therefore, it is doubtful whether the constitution prepared by him would accommodate the existence of other political parties. This constitution might lead to a system not different from what is called 'People's Democracy' found in many of the Communist-dominated countries of to-day<sup>4</sup>.

Secondly, during this period Roy's concept of the sovereignty of the people took the form of the absolute sovereign right of the state. An analysis of the Constitution prepared by him for

1. M. N. Roy, Constitution of India—A Draft, p. 16, Article 2.

2. Ibid., p. 15, Article 1 (a)

3. Ibid., p. 15, Article 1 (t).

4. Explaining the meaning of 'People's Democracy' Dorothy

India shows that he tried to develop a thoroughly centralised all-powerful state in the country. The Federal Assembly was given the right to legislate on all matters<sup>5</sup> and the Central Government was authorised to veto any Provincial legislation on the ground that it was repugnant to the Constitution<sup>6</sup>. The Constitution prepared by Roy was structurally federal, the provinces were declared to be fully "autonomous"<sup>7</sup>, but it was provided that "all territorial units in India including those that remain out of Federal Union,<sup>8</sup> shall have a uniformly democratic constitution"<sup>9</sup>. In spite of the federal structure the constitution was unitary in spirit. Roy himself stated that in the constitution an attempt was made to reconcile Federalism with Centralism leaving "no room for fissiparous tendencies"<sup>10</sup>. As a socialist he stood for an unlimited extension of the power of the state and tried to bring the entire society under its omnipotent control. The Constitution drafted by him has a chapter on 'The Economic Organization of Society' which provides for the planning of the entire production, agricultural as well as industrial, by the state<sup>11</sup>. It granted freedom of enterprise, individual as well as co-operative, subject to the principle that the purpose of production is to satisfy the requirements of the people<sup>12</sup>, and it was provided that to realise the aforesaid object, the state "has the right to fix the maximum and minimum return on private investment, the prices of goods produced or exchanged, the remuneration and working conditions of wage-earners and salaried employees, and to take over private enterprises under state ownership by paying fair compensation to the owners thereof"<sup>13</sup>. Roy therefore stood for an all-powerful centralised state as the only agency to ensure social progress. He tried to make the state broad-

Pickles writes that in it "the expression of the people's will is provided for by an intricate system of leadership from above within a single governmental party or alliance, thus restricting the citizen's effective choice to either support for, or refusal to support, one party". *A glossary of Political Terms*, edited by Maurice Cranston, p. 80.

5. M. N. Roy, Constitution of India—A Draft, p. 28, Article 54.
6. Ibid., p. 30, Article 62.
7. Ibid., p. 33, Article 74.
8. Ibid., Article 75.
9. Ibid., p. 13 Article 1 (e).
10. Ibid., p. 5 (Introduction).
11. Ibid., p. 39, Articles 106, 107.
12. Ibid., p. 41, Article 117.
13. Ibid., pp. 41-42, Article 118.

based by giving the people organised in the People's Committees the right to control the state but the state remained the supreme organisation in the society, the sole embodiment of the sovereign power of the people. A firm believer in the monistic theory of state, he identified Socialism with Statism.

The experience of the Russian Revolution brought about a profound change in Roy's political outlook. It led him to conclude that to realise the ideal of the sovereignty of the people, the term 'people' must be interpreted as the sum total of individuals and not in a collective sense. He wrote : "A political system and an economic experiment which subordinates *the man of flesh and blood* to an imaginary collective ego, be it the nation or class, cannot possibly be the suitable means for the attainment of the goal of freedom . . . . Any social philosophy or scheme of social reconstruction which does not recognise *the sovereignty of the individual*, and dismisses the ideal of freedom as an empty abstraction, can have no more than a very limited progressive and revolutionary significance"<sup>14</sup>. Roy now became convinced of the dangerous implication of the terms 'people' and 'Peoples' interest' which may justify the denial of freedom to the so-called 'enemies of the people'. He therefore laid emphasis on 'the sovereignty of the individual' and on the 'man of flesh and blood'<sup>15</sup>. He consequently became an individualist and was drawn towards the ideas of liberal individualism of the nineteenth and implied anti-democratic elements. He became convinced of century. His theory of the state was now purged of all subtle the close relation between ends and means and this brought moral considerations prominently into his political philosophy.

Roy's ideas about the function of the state, the nature of sovereignty and the role of power were also profoundly influenced by his experience of the Russian Revolution.

The problem of state and power vis-a-vis freedom has been one of the perplexing problems of political science throughout. A group of thinkers contends that the state based on power

14. Principle No. 8 (Italics mine).

15. On other occasions also Roy referred to the sovereignty of the individual. See PPP, pp. 66, 68. Explaining Roy's theory of sovereignty Dr Prakash Chandra writes : "The State must be re-organised on the principle that sovereignty belongs to the people and since the people is composed of individual human beings, therefore, in the last analysis sovereignty belongs to the individual components of society. Any other theory in contradiction to this principle must be condemned and rejected outright". Dr Prakash Chandra, op. cit., p. 180.

is associated with violence, force and oppression, and, therefore, in order to realise the ideal of freedom they seek to abolish it altogether. Another group of thinkers believes that the state represents the interest of the community and therefore it is the best instrument to secure the social good and to promote human freedom. Karl Marx belonged to the former group, though, in order to realise the ideal of a stateless society through the activities of the state under the absolute control of the proletariat or its party, his followers made the state in Russia the repository of unlimited dictatorial power. The democratic world has reacted to the Russian experiment in two different ways. One group supports the extension of the power of the state to social and economic spheres but tries at the same time to maintain the democratic character of the state. Lord Keynes, Sir William Beveridge, Professor Hansen and many other eminent theorists belong to this group. They try to lay the foundation of a free society through planning. But another group of libertarian thinkers of our age including F. A. Hayek, Dr Wilhelm Ropke, Ludwig Von Mises, believe that the extension of state authority to the economic and social spheres would increase the power of the bureaucracy to such an extent that in spite of its democratic constitution the state would develop into a Leviathan, eclipsing the individuals. This school of thought holds that "what once were regarded as inherently socialist institutions—public enterprise, a planned economy, even social services—are deliberately employed to reduce every individual to a helpless victim of the state"<sup>16</sup>. The experience of the Russian Revolution placed Roy in this second group. He was not opposed to the state as such and considered the ideal of the stateless society as an obvious absurdity. The withering away of the state under Communism, Roy wrote, "is a utopia which has been exploded by experience"<sup>17</sup>. He pointed out that even in an ideal condition, when all contradictory forces would disappear from society and there would remain no classes and class oppression, the state would remain as a necessary institution<sup>18</sup>. A complicated organization of the modern civilization with greatly diversified field of activities cannot exist, he pointed out, without a central organisation, that is, the State. The State is based on power but

16. *Twentieth Century Socialism*, by Socialist Union (A Penguin Special), p. 15.

17. Principle No. 9.

18. RH, p 37.

power itself was not considered by him as an evil. The experience of the Russian Revolution led him to conclude that it is the concentration of power which constitutes a threat to human freedom. He wrote : "Power can be defined as the ability to do things. As such power will always have a place in human society. But the usefulness of power is eclipsed by abuses when it is concentrated to such extent that the community as a whole becomes totally powerless"<sup>19</sup>. Analysing the conditions of Russia he concluded : "State ownership of the means of production, called nationalisation and state control of the economic life, means so much concentration of power as rules out the possibility of democratic freedom"<sup>20</sup>. The main lesson that Roy drew from the Russian experiment was that to safeguard individual freedom power must not be allowed to be concentrated in the state or in any single institution or in the hands of few persons. Power, he concluded, should be distributed among various social institutions, and in each institution power must remain diffused among the people at large instead of being concentrated in the hands of the few at the top. The first ideal leads to pluralism and the second to the principle of democratic decentralization. Roy's conversion from the monistic theory of state to 'social pluralism'<sup>21</sup> must therefore be traced to his experience of the unfoldment of the Russian Revolution.

Though Roy was now, as we have mentioned earlier, essentially an individualist, his theory of pluralism and the principle of democratic decentralization did not lead him towards the acceptance of a political and economic order based on 'atomised' individualism. He contended that an atomised individual feels helpless in the modern large and complicated society whatever his theoretical rights. By reducing the authority of the state Roy tried to bring the voluntary associations of the people more and more into prominence. In the political philosophy of Radical Humanism the two associations that came out prominently were the People's Committee and Co-operatives for realising the political and economic ends of the State. The idea of the People's Committee was introduced into India by

19. PPP, p. 181.

20. RH, pp. 54-55.

21. In his book *The State and the Citizen*, J. D. Mabbott prefers the term 'Social pluralism' to 'political pluralism'. The Pluralists seek to bring various social institutions into prominence and therefore this term appears to be more appropriate.

Roy during his Marxist period and it was obviously taken from the institution of the 'Soviet' in Russia. The 'Soviet' was at first conceived as an organisation of the people to exercise standing control over the administration of the country. Lenin wrote : "The entire power in the state must pass exclusively to the representatives of the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies in accordance with definite program, and the government must be fully accountable to them"<sup>22</sup>. In Russia the experiment with Soviet Democracy was defeated by the rule of the proletarian dictatorship. Roy tried to raise democracy on a higher level by reconstructing the state on the basis of the Soviet as originally conceived<sup>23</sup>. The People's Committee was now conceived not simply as the structural basis of the state but also as the organ through which political power could be decentralised. An economic organisation founded on the voluntary cooperative enterprise of the local people led Roy to revive the tradition of Utopian Socialism<sup>24</sup> and of Mutualism which tried to solve the economic problems of capitalism through cooperatives rather than through the power of the State. A decentralised political and economic structure conceived by Roy brought his social and political theories nearer to those of Mahatma Gandhi and his virulent crusade against Gandhism ended. His main purpose was to build up a society without exploitation and regimentation. This quest is not new. Syndicalism, Guild Socialism and Anarchism represent different attempts to realise this ideal. Radical Humanism as a political and economic system may be judged as a new attempt in the same direction.

We have so far discussed the basic motivations of Roy in formulating the social, political and economic doctrines of New Humanism, and let us now examine them in detail.

The origin of society and the state and their relations to the individual is one of the most vital problems of political philosophy. All social philosophies tend to develop a leaning or preference in one direction, either towards society or towards the individual. The essential character of a social doctrine—whether

22. *Lenin Selected Works II* (Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1947), p. 127.

23. John Strachey in his pamphlet *The Challenge of Democracy* (An Encounter Pamphlet No. 10) refers to Lenin's faith in Democracy, see p. 9.

24. Utopianism was characterised by Roy as "a declaration of faith in man's power to mould his destiny", *RRR*, II, p. 200.

it is authoritarian or democratic, totalitarian or individualistic—is determined mainly by the answer it offers to this problem.

The relation between the individual and society follows logically from the theory of the origin of society. It is not unreasonable to assume that a philosopher engrossed mainly with the problems of the age tries to construct a theory about the origin of society and state which is consistent with the main philosophical views he seeks to uphold. A political philosopher hardly makes the painstaking research of an anthropologist to unveil the mystery of the origin of the society and state. He is more concerned with their nature, function and their relation to the individual than with their origin. His theory about the origin of society and state provides essentially a suitable background for his theories about their function, nature and relation to individuals. This is more or less true of all political philosophers of all ages. The difference between Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau about the origin of society and state, for example, can be explained more by their desire to justify different forms of government than by any genuine difference on anthropological or historical evidence and interpretation.

Though the normative considerations of the relation between the individual, society and state largely determine the positive theory about their origin maintained by a political philosopher, for logical consistency we should discuss the latter first while examining the political philosophy of M. N. Roy. Roy categorically asserted that “society is a creation of man”<sup>25</sup> and said that “this view is logically more consistent as well as empirically demonstrable”<sup>26</sup>. His insistence upon the human creation of society was due to his attempt to explode the assumption of its organic character. He pointed out that the theory of the human creation of society is based on the scientific theory about the descent of man. He observed: “It logically follows from the theory of evolution that mankind, at a low level of development, existed before society and state came into being; and these are human creations. The logical deduction is corroborated empirically by the existence even to-day of primitive tribes living almost like animal herds.....Descending from animal ancestry, the human species in the earliest stages of evolution must have lived very much like its progenitors”<sup>27</sup>.

25. RRR, II. p. 277.

26. PPP, p. 33.

27. *Radical Humanist*, XV, (August 26, 1951), p. 400.



From this quotation it appears that Roy did not include "primitive tribes living almost like animal herds" within the sphere of social life. It would not be unreasonable to hold that by social existence Roy meant a deliberate and rational co-operative life among man and excluded the stage of the gregarious life derived from the herd instinct present even in the animal kingdom. He maintained that "the original creation of society was a rational act"<sup>28</sup>. He admitted the existence of a stage of pre-social human existence, that is, a "state of nature", which was, he wrote, not the idealised state of Rousseau's imagination. The Hobbesian description of pre-social mankind, according to him, was closed to the reality<sup>29</sup>. Although Roy admitted the existence of "primitive tribes living almost like animal herds" before the social existence of man, he categorically and repeatedly affirmed that primitive man, before he set up society, was alone and led an individual life. He wrote : "Coming out of background of biological evolution, the human species starts its struggle as individuals"<sup>30</sup>. According to him, man created society in order to conduct his struggle for existence, which he began as an individual, more successfully and efficiently. In other words, the human urge for freedom lay behind the creation of society. "Society is a creation of man—in quest of freedom. Co-operative social relationships were established originally with the purpose of re-inforcing the struggle for existence which the primitive man had undertaken as individual"<sup>31</sup>. Man realised that by acting together he could make his struggle for existence more effective. That rational judgement led to the foundation of civil society, and Roy, therefore, stated that "in the last analysis the problem was about the nature of man"<sup>32</sup>.

Roy's view about the origin of society and its relation to the individual appears to be confusing and oversimplified. The generally accepted view of sociology is that social life arose out of

28. PPP, p. 37.

29. *Radical Humanist*, XV (August 26, 1951), p. 400.

30. RRR, II, p. 283.

31. Ibid., p. 277.

32. PPP, p. 106.

Roy held similar views even when he had been a Marxist. He wrote in the Jail Volumes : "Society had originated as association of individuals. A society that suppresses the individual runs contrary to its own historical purpose. Individual man (and woman) is prior not only to family, but society itself, this being a creation of the individual". *Jail Volume*, IX, pp. 145(b)—146(a), Marginal notes.

the extension of the family life or the tribal life, though there is a protracted controversy among the scholars as to whether the families arose out of the disintegration of tribes or tribes arose out of the amalgamation of families. Roy also admitted the existence, as we have already mentioned, of 'primitive tribes living almost like animal herds', but instead of regarding social life as a continuation of tribal life, he maintained that society was a creation of individuals, though he never explained how the primitive tribes were dissolved into individuals. He has not given us any evidence to substantiate his theory that society is the rational creation of individuals. In the evolution of human society a distinction is generally made between the instinctive stage and the rational stage, the former gradually merging into the latter. This distinction in many schools of modern sociology has taken the form of a distinction between community and society. Ludwin Stein, for example, maintains that the community is an instinctive product and society implies conscious and deliberate cooperation. Giddings also makes a similar distinction between the instinctive and rational stages of social evolution. In India Sri Aurobindo also made a clear distinction between the infra-rational, rational and supra-rational stages of the social evolution. In his analysis of human nature Roy referred to instinct as primitive reason and he derived the basic attributes of man's nature from his animal ancestry. Therefore, he should logically have traced the origin of society to primitive tribal life.

By maintaining that society is the rational creation of individuals Roy revived the old theory of Social Contract though he tried to differentiate his view from that doctrine. He observed : "On the strength of this evolutionary view we must reject the eighteenth century conception of Social Contract : as if once upon a time primitive human beings met in a kind of conference and entered into a contract by which social relations were henceforth to be governed. Just as the human species itself, social organisation also came into being in the early stages of the rise of man, perhaps by accidental circumstances, and in course of time evolved into more and more purposive and complex forms"<sup>33</sup>. If Society came into being by accidental circumstances in the early stage of human history, how can it be regarded as a rational creation of individuals ?

Like society, the state also is, according to Roy, a human creation. He defined the state as "the political organisation of

a human community”<sup>34</sup>. According to him man created the state out of two necessities : first, the administration of public affairs and the maintenance of law and order, and secondly, the co-ordination of various departments of social life<sup>35</sup>. The state was therefore created by man for his own interest in quest of freedom. Roy pointed out that it was not a coercive institution imposed forcibly upon man from above by some individual or any class for the domination of society, nor was it the result of any particular contract entered into at a particular period of time. “It was a spontaneous process promoted, almost mechanically, by the common realisation of the necessity of cooperation for the security of all concerned and for the administration of public affairs”<sup>36</sup>. The state was not super-imposed on society, and therefore, it was not inconsistent with human freedom. Roy accepted neither the Marxist theory of the state as an engine of class oppression nor the classical liberal view of the state as a necessary evil. After the formation of society man created various institutions “as so many instruments to serve the purpose of his being and becoming”<sup>37</sup>. The state was one of these institutions but it was not given “any totalistic significance”<sup>38</sup>. The state, Roy wrote, rose as one of the many social institutions, all equally autonomous in their spheres—economic, educational, cultural, political. Like MacIver and other pluralist thinkers, Roy considered the state as one of the organs of the community.

In Roy’s political philosophy, society and state are instruments created by man to serve his own interest. He argued that man as creator “is prior to society and the state. The latter are the means for attaining the end of freedom and progress of man”<sup>39</sup>. Since the individual is prior to society, so, he argued, individual freedom must have priority over social organisation<sup>40</sup>. Their relation is one of ends and means, the means are justified only in so far as they can promote the end. All measures to restrict individual liberty for ensuring collective welfare were considered by him as dangerous, because “once it is conceded that

34. RH, p. 22.

35. PPP, p. 74.

36. RH, p. 23.

37. RRR, II, p. 269.

38. PPP, p. 74.

39. RRR, II, p. 283.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 284.

It is interesting to note here that in the Jail Volumes Roy wrote : “Representative government, government responsible to the people, popular

restriction of individual liberty is justifiable for the sake of collective welfare, it follows logically that complete absence of the one may mean the fullest attainment of the other ideal"<sup>41</sup>. In this political philosophy the importance of society and state is not ignored but they are given only instrumental values. Explaining this aspect of his philosophy Roy wrote: "It is not an anarchic individualism, because a point has no existence except in space. Similarly while individuals cannot exist independent of society, yet society is no more than an integration of individuals"<sup>42</sup>. Society as such has got, Roy asserted, no separate existence apart from the individuals composing it. Society has no interest independent of the interests of the individuals who form the society. What Roy opposed here is the organic view of society—the imaginary conception of a social interest, will and personality transcending the interest, will and personality of individuals composing society. The relation between the state and individual, according to him, is the same as the relation between the society and individuals. "The state being the political organisation of human community, its relation with the individuals is a continuation of the relation between man and society... As the political organisation of human community, the state is also a creation of man, and therefore, it cannot claim the subordination of the individuals without reversing the relation between the creator and creation"<sup>43</sup>. Roy's was a violent protest against the idealist and metaphysical theory of the state which makes the state an omnipotent all-comprehensive living institution with its own will and personality reducing the individuals to the position of its mere cells. He always emphasised that the state like society and all other institutions was a means to an end—the end being individual welfare and freedom. The means are not less important but the end must be given primary significance. Therefore, Roy continued that "not only should we give at least equal weight

sovereignty—all these forms of political freedom derive their legal and moral sanction from the doctrine that function of the state is to protect the rights and liberties of the individual, that society is an aggregate of individuals, and should be so organised and administered as to provide each of its members greatest possible freedom and opportunity for self-development". *Jail Volumes, IX*, p. 168(a).

41. RH, p. 20.

42. PPP, p. 141.

43. RH, pp. 22-23.

to the two related things, but primacy must be given to man, the individual human beings"<sup>44</sup>.

From this ends-and-means relation Roy concluded that there should not be any restriction on the freedom of the individual on the ground of social or collective welfare. The "end" can never be sacrificed at the altar of the "means". He maintained that there could be "no contradiction between the fullest freedom of the individual and a harmonious social order"<sup>45</sup>. The attempt to restrict individual freedom on the ground of maintaining collective welfare was an anathema to him.

Roy admitted that the problem of the relation between the society and the individual becomes more difficult in proportion as society becomes more and more complex. But the original purpose of all social organisations, he maintained, was to help man to develop the potentialities inherent in him as a biological organism. Therefore, Roy concluded that the social organisation which inhibits the possibility of free development of human personality is contrary to the original purpose with which human society was created. National prosperity and social progress were considered by him as frauds unless they referred to the progress, prosperity, welfare and freedom of the individual which to him was the only criterion of measuring social progress<sup>46</sup>. They had not simply an economic connotation, but also a cultural significance. He wrote: "In modern society, an individual, to be free, must not only be able to enjoy the economic sufficiency and security, but live in a psychological atmosphere free from cultural regimentation and helpful to the development of his intellectual and other human potentialities. Progressive attainment of freedom in this wide sense by the individuals composing society should provide the criterion for judging the merits of social organisation"<sup>47</sup>.

Lest Roy's ideas should be misunderstood it is necessary to make three brief observations at this stage. In the first place, Roy's individualism must not be equated with ego-centrism. Society implies cooperative life and to live in society which was essential for individual development, man, Roy said, "had to adjust himself to the need and desires and sentiments of other human beings also"<sup>48</sup>. Secondly, Roy did not deny the possi-

44. PPP, p. 121

45. *Ibid.*, p. 36.

46. NH, p. 29. The concept of 'freedom' as understood by Roy, has been explained in the chapter "Human Nature and Ethics".

47. RRR, II, p. 277.

48. PPP, p. 35.

bility of the conflict between individuals and the necessity of laws and regulations to keep individuals within the proper limit. He observed : "When a large number of people live together, the development of human beings being unequal, there is always the possibility of conflict, which may develop violent form. Hence, political organisation is always a necessity"<sup>49</sup>. Roy was not an anarchist and did not stand for the removal of all restrictions on the conduct of man. Thirdly, he argued that it might be possible for man to comply more and more voluntarily with the laws and regulations necessary to maintain social harmony. With the development of his rational and moral sense, the individuals may, out of their own accord, live in harmony with the laws and regulations. "Since the impulse leading to the creation of society is the urge for freedom . . . the social responsibility of individuals need not be obligatory. Under the normal conditions, it is bound to be discharged voluntarily; because the preservation and evolution of society are necessary for enabling each of its members to unfold his or her potentialities. The concept of individual freedom, therefore, is not incompatible with social responsibilities"<sup>50</sup>. Here Roy came very near to Anarchism though the state as a coordinating machinery of the various departments of social life, he said, would always remain. Unlike the Anarchists of the Bakunin-Kropotkin school, he held that the era of full social cooperation and mutuality could be reached not by destroying the existing coercive institutions of the state and government but by developing the moral sense of the individual men and women. He stated categorically : "I am of the opinion that, to be able to live in peace with society and with ourselves, to behave morally and intelligently, depends very largely on the individuals"<sup>51</sup>.

Roy's ideas explained above would become clearer if they are judged in the context of his conception of law. Like sovereignty the concept of law is vital to any theory of state. Roy however did not build up any new theory of law, but made some observations on it while discussing the problems of human nature and freedom, and they enable us to form a clear idea about his view on law. Roy believed that there was no absolute antagonism between law and liberty. He tried, as we have explained in another chapter, to trace the foundation of human

49. *Ibid.*, pp. 36-37.

50. BC, p. 151.

51. PPP, p. 40.

reason to the law-governed universe, and according to him it is this reason which led man to establish society and the state in order to realise his freedom. Laws of the state like the laws of Nature should also be rational and should be directed towards the realisation of human freedom. Just as by discovering the laws of Nature man has developed science and thus promoted his freedom, similarly by finding out the appropriate laws of the society it is possible for man to administer the social life in such a way as would help the individuals to realise his freedom more and more. He wrote : "The laws of the order of nature could be discovered and understood. They need no longer be ascribed to any supernatural agency beyond the control of man; and society, being also a creation of man, could be so administered as to serve the purpose of man, the purpose being attainment of freedom"<sup>52</sup>. Roy thus carried forward the tradition of the natural law which was first formulated by the Greek thinkers of the classical period and was later developed by the Stoics. It found a prominent place in the thoughts of many Roman and medieval thinkers like Cicero and Thomas Aquinas and was restated in modern secular terms by Locke, Grotius and others. Roy carried the same tradition and while discussing the interpretation of the Natural Law by Grotius he observed : "The doctrine of Natural Law has always been based on an appeal to reason; Grotius cleared the concept of reason from all mystic and transcendental connotation, and defined it as a property of the human mind. Thus, the old notion of Natural Law as elaborated by him provided a rational method for the making of positive laws for the guidance of the political organisation of society"<sup>53</sup>. Thus, positive laws discovered by the rational method may promote human freedom, and there will remain no antagonism between such laws and human nature. Therefore, Roy believed that as man would become increasingly aware of his rational and moral nature it may be possible for him to obey the laws voluntarily, because the ultimate sanction of law lies in his own rational nature and not in any authority above him. From this brief analysis it is evident that Roy did not consider law as the revelation of any divine will, nor as the expression of the desire of the dominant class to maintain its supremacy as Marx believed, nor as the command of a determinate human superior as Austin maintained. Roy's main problem was to create a social order

52. RRR, I, p. 160.

53. *Ibid.*, p. 152.

where the laws of the state will be based on reason and will thus help man to attain more and more freedom.

Though Roy tried to establish a harmony between law and liberty and acknowledged the importance of society, his view about the relation of interdependence between individuals as end and society as means is too mechanical a concept likely to become dangerous in practice. Discussing the problem of the relation between individual and society, Roy's two most faithful followers wrote : "(Besides) Society while it is composed of individuals is also an impersonal pattern, not independent of its individual constituents but constituted of inter-personal relations. The individuals living in society develop various complicated relations among themselves which, while they cannot exist apart from individuals, have nevertheless a certain reality of their own and consequently certain specific laws of causal sequence"<sup>54</sup>. The relation between individual freedom and social organisation is not one of priority but of reciprocity. Discussing this problem Alexander Gray rightly observed : "While it may be convenient to contrast individualism and socialism, they are not so much opposed as complementary principles. There is no one who is completely and exclusively an individualist, just as there is no one who is completely and exclusively a socialist. We are each of us an individual in society"<sup>55</sup>. Undue stress on society may eclipse the individual and too much emphasis on the individual may sap the foundation of social cohesion. The problem is to strike a balance between the two but the fear of totalitarianism led Roy to over-emphasise the individual. To maintain social cohesion some restriction on individual liberty is necessary. As Hobhouse has put it : "If liberty then be regarded as a social ideal, the problem of establishing liberty must be a problem of organising restraints"<sup>56</sup>. Roy's advocacy of complete individual liberty unrestricted by all considerations of collective welfare appears to be rather an extreme view. But at the same time he recognised the necessity of the state and its laws to maintain harmony between interests of different individuals. How were these two views to be reconciled? Possibly what Roy meant was that liberty of one individual may be regulated in order to safeguard the liberty of other individuals but it must not be restricted on the ground

54. Sibnarayan Ray and Ellen Roy, *In Man's Own Image*, p. 119.

55. Alexander Gray, *The Socialist Tradition : Moses to Lenin*, pp. 484-488.

56. L. T. Hobhouse, *Social Evolution and Political Theory*, p. 180.



of a 'collective welfare'. As a matter of fact the concept of 'collective welfare' may be conceived in two different ways. It may imply the sacrifice and negation of individual liberty as in Fascism or in Communism but it may also be conceived as a social pre-condition of the freedom of the individual. Society is not simply an aggregation of individuals. Though the purpose of society is to promote individual interest still it has got an existence of its own. Individuals must conform to various laws and regulations in order to maintain the social structure and create social conditions conducive to individual freedom. The freedom of the individual comes as the ultimate value but individual conduct may be regulated and restricted on the ground of maintaining proper social atmosphere. "It has been argued", Ernest Barker rightly points out, "that there is no antithesis between individualism, in the sense of a belief in the development of individual personality, and collectivism in the sense of a belief in the collective service necessary for individual development"<sup>57</sup>.

As a staunch advocate of individual freedom, Roy considered democracy as theoretically the best form of Government so far conceived by man. The democratic principle of popular sovereignty, he explained, implies that the people are qualified and entitled to rule themselves, and this principle leads logically to a government of the people and by the people. A government for the people, he said, is not necessarily a democratic government, because a benevolent despot may also rule the country for the welfare of the people<sup>58</sup>. The ideal of democracy or self-government would be realised only if the government happens to be a government of the people and by the people, and Roy examined the practice of democracy by the application of this standard, and found that the ideal of real democracy and individual freedom were not realised in practice anywhere. He stated : "While individual liberty still remains a professed ideal, theoretically guaranteed, to a greater or lesser degree, by all modern democratic constitutions, in practice it is subordinated to the exigency of organisation. The undeniable necessity of protecting and promoting collective welfare seems to contradict the concept of individual freedom. It is held that cooperation and organisation indispensable for the purpose presupposes restriction of the liberty of the individual, and that

57. Ernest Barker, *Principles of Social and Political Theory*, (Oxford Paperback), p. 273.

58. RH, p. 28.

the constitution which reduces the necessary restrictions to the most minimum degree assures the nearest approximation to the ideal of democracy".<sup>59</sup> In theory democracy stands for the freedom of the individual and the sovereignty of the people, but in practice he found that even in democratic countries there were many restrictions upon individual liberty, and the sovereignty of the people remained more or less a legal fiction. The main objective of his political philosophy was to eliminate this discrepancy and to realise the ideal of popular sovereignty in practice.

The modern representative or indirect form of democracy is based upon the principle of delegation of power. The people elect a few representatives to the legislature and these representatives claim the right to rule the country in the name of the sovereign people. Roy thought that to be real, democracy must mean the constant exercise of sovereign power by the people<sup>60</sup>, and therefore he condemned the practice of the delegation of powers as a negation of democracy. The delegation of authority was considered by Roy as incompatible with the principle of popular sovereignty, because sovereignty, he argued, was an inalienable right and therefore cannot be transferred. He wrote: "As soon as on one pretext or another, power is taken away from the people by delegation, even for the shortest period of time, democracy is killed. Power must always remain vested in the people; that is the only guarantee for democracy"<sup>61</sup>. Representative democracy theoretically accepted the principle of sovereignty of the people and the only way in which they can exercise this right under it is through periodical election. Once the election is over, the people are deprived of all actual authority and have no control over the representatives. The voting right in election time thus is simply a way to surrender power in favour of a particular candidate. This is, in Roy's opinion, the basic contradiction between the theory of popular sovereignty and its practice under the present system of democracy. This contradiction, he maintained, has discredited democracy and given dictatorship a chance to thrive. To quote Roy's own

59. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

60. "To make democracy effective, power must always remain vested in the people, and there must be ways and means for the people to wield the sovereign power effectively, not periodically, but from day to day". Principle No. 12.

61. PPP, p. 84.

words: "The implication of this vote was to delegate his sovereign power to a group of individuals or some party which became the repositories of the sovereignty for the period between two elections. Now, the practice of democracy shows that between the two elections the sovereign people is nowhere in the picture and has absolutely no possibility of controlling those who are ruling the country on their behalf; and consequently delegation of power for all practical purposes, has become surrender of power. The people exercise their sovereignty by surrendering it from time to time. That was the basic contradiction of democratic practice. Because of this contradiction democracy eventually become discredited and supplied plausible reason for the rise of various forms of dictatorship"<sup>62</sup>. In the representative form of democracy the political power through the election process is concentrated in the hands of the few representatives and therefore it cannot establish a government of the people and by the people, which, according to Roy, is the essence of democracy. If the representatives are inspired by a spirit of popular welfare, they can at best set up a government for the people. And a government for the people, in Roy's opinion, as already pointed out, is not a democratic government. "Governments for the people", he wrote, "in reality became rulers of the people. The sovereign was degraded to the position of the ruled".<sup>63</sup> Such a government, according to him, "is no more democratic than a monarchist government or even a more or less benevolent dictatorship. Because kings and dictators also claim to rule for the people"<sup>64</sup>. And the professions of the democratic leaders need not be taken more seriously than those of the kings and dictators. The only difference between representative democracy and benevolent dictatorship or monarchy, in his opinion, is that the representatives unlike the dictators or monarchs are elected by the people.

Though keenly conscious of the drawbacks of the present system of parliamentary democracy, Roy did not advocate dictatorship as a remedy. He considered dictatorship of all varieties and even as a transitional device as a great evil. He pointed out that "under dictatorship the worst defects of democracy—namely practical elimination of popular sovereignty and negation of the principle of individual freedom—will be

62. *Ibid.*, p. 52.

63. RH, p. 29-30.

64. PPP, p. 116.

still further aggravated. This is not an improvement on defective democracy for those who cherish the ideals of individual freedom and sovereignty of the people. Hence, when thinking of a political theory and practice suitable for our time they must reject dictatorship as a possible alternative"<sup>65</sup>. All theories which recommend some form of dictatorship as a means for the ultimate achievement of democracy were considered by him as logically fallacious. Dictatorship, however benevolent it might be, cannot help people to stand upon their own feet, and so a dictatorship can never create a climate suitable for the practice of democracy. "The control of the State by one party claiming to be the sole custodian of popular interest is antagonistic to democracy. Paternalism, even with the best of motives, kills self-reliance in the people and fosters in them an authoritarian mentality, a predisposition to accept authority as the natural order of things"<sup>66</sup>. Democracy requires training in self-government, and dictatorship, however laudable might be the purpose with which it is set up, cannot impart this training to the people. Dictatorship means the negation of freedom, and "it is absurd to argue," Roy pointed out, "that negation of freedom will lead to freedom"<sup>67</sup>. Referring to the Marxist criticism of democracy, Roy observed: "If Parliamentary Democracy is to be improved on the ground that it is veiled dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, an open dictatorship of the proletariat cannot be logically advocated as the better alternative"<sup>68</sup>. The experience of Russia convinced him that dictatorship once established as a means to a good end develops the tendency to perpetuate itself<sup>69</sup> discarding the end in the process. This led him to conclude that ends and means are closely related. Between defective parliamentary democracy and dictatorship Roy preferred the former. He wrote: "In the transition period, parliamentary democracy with all its manifest failures and inadequacies, will be obviously preferable to a dictatorship. Civil liberties will have a greater chance of survival so long as several parties alternate in power or contend for power than under one-party rule"<sup>70</sup>. But Roy's choice was not limited to dicta-

65. *Ibid.*, p. 55.

66. *Ibid.*, p. 96.

67. Principle No. 8.

68. PPP, p. 80.

69. Principle No. 11.

70. PPP, p. 96.

torship and parliamentary democracy. He categorically rejected all brands of dictatorships and considered democracy practised so far as inadequate for realising the principle of popular sovereignty, and, therefore, he was searching for a new pattern of democratic practice.

Roy's criticism of Parliamentary Democracy, it may be pointed out here, is unduly harsh and bitter. Although he recognised it as better than open dictatorship, he had nevertheless a tendency to minimise its qualitative difference from ancient monarchy and modern totalitarianism. People in the present system of democracy may not exercise sovereign power directly but the civil and political rights which they enjoy under it are undoubtedly of great significance. The support of the party may enable a government in a parliamentary democracy to pass any law it proposes but the Government is always subject to criticism and vigilance through the press, platform, political parties, parliament etc. Though parliamentary democracy in practice is often reduced to what is called 'Cabinet Dictatorship', it has to work under so many limitations that its difference with the totalitarian system is fundamental and too palpable to be ignored. Roy's denunciation of Parliamentary Democracy appears to be a legacy of his Marxist heritage.

Representative Democracy, according to Roy, lost all its democratic character owing to the rise of the party system. His unqualified opposition to the party system stems mainly from two considerations, namely, its undemocratic nature and its corrupting influence.

The party system is antagonistic to democracy in two ways. In the first place, it carries further the tendency to the concentration of power in the hands of a few which is inherent, as we have seen, in Representative Democracy. In this form of democracy the people lose their sovereign power after electing their representatives but owing to the influence of the party system the representatives themselves are deprived of their freedom and remain under the control of the party machinery which has ensured their success in the election. The majority party (or coalition of parties) in the Parliament forms the Government, and, therefore, Roy remarked that "a representative government represents only the party which controls it and the membership of the largest party is only a small fraction of the people. In other words, representative party government is the

rule of a minority”<sup>71</sup>. Even the members of the government party in the parliament are not free to run the government because they remain under the leading string of the party whip. Therefore, ultimately the power, owing to the influence of the party system, is concentrated in the hands of the few leaders who control the party in power. Roy thus described the whole process: “The electorate delegates its sovereign power to a party; only a few members of the party go to parliament; there they are subject to discipline, are whipped into the government lobby; and a fewer still actually compose the government and wield power”<sup>72</sup>. To realise the democratic principle of popular sovereignty, power should be diffused among the people, but the party system “leads to concentration of power and hence carries in it the germs of the destruction of democracy”<sup>73</sup>. The present form of democracy, thus, according to Roy, ultimately degenerates into ‘party dictatorship’.

Secondly, the party system destroys democracy by denying the individuals any significant opportunity for effective political action. With the rise of the party system the party has replaced the Demos as the dominating factor in Democracy. Under the present system the candidates for election usually appear not as individuals but as party members, and thus “impersonal party machines have eclipsed individual candidates; the choice is between parties”<sup>74</sup>. The candidates for election with the support of political parties behind them try to win the votes of the people by creating an atmosphere of mass hysteria. Whipped up into a state of frenzy most of the people lose their discriminating power while exercising their franchise. In election campaigns appeals are not made to individual voters and their power of reasoning but to the sentiment of masses<sup>75</sup>. Thus under the party system, Roy showed, the individual completely disappears from politics, whether as candidate for election or as elector. Sovereignty of the individual man is the essence of democracy and Roy was uncompromisingly opposed to a system which, he thought, led to the annihilation of the individual.

Another reason for Roy’s opposition to the party system was, as we have already mentioned, its corrupting influence.

71. RH, p. 30.

72. *Ibid.*, p. 33-34.

73. PPP, p. 63.

74. *Ibid.*, p. 68.

75. *Ibid.*, pp. 52-53.

The corrupting influence of the party follows from its strategy of the capture of power. Every political party tries to come to power in order to implement its programme, and in order to come to power or to retain power it adopts every possible means, fair or foul. Acting upon the time-honoured dictum—the end justifies the means,—the political parties become unscrupulous about the means and thus all ethical considerations disappear from political practice.<sup>76</sup> An election under the present democratic practice is a race between parties to capture power, and so Roy characterised the parliamentary party system as a scramble for power. Under this system of unscrupulous scramble for power honesty and sincerity have no chance to survive. The political parties thus lead to an immoral system of political practice. The causes of immorality lie inherent in the party system and therefore Roy concluded that it can never be purified. In his quest for moral politics Roy thus had to give up party politics.<sup>77</sup>

While discussing Roy's concept of politics without party we should at the very outset refer to a suspicion that may lurk in many minds. Was the dissolution of the party (Radical Democratic Party) in 1948, and the concept of partyless politics an instance of making a virtue out of necessity? The R. D. P. was completely routed in the elections of 1945 and it was so unpopular in the country that after independence it had little chance of developing into a great force.<sup>78</sup> It is therefore argued that when power was actually transferred to the Indian National Congress by the British Government Roy realised that in the field of power politics his future was sealed. Out of frustration, therefore, he is said to have developed the theory of partyless politics and politics without power. There is a tendency among some to explain Roy's concept of partyless politics by this psychological factor, but such explanations appear to be wholly

76. RH, p. 33.

77. Palmer's observation that Roy was opposed to the party system since he believed that "the people are too backward to become politically conscious and discriminating members of any party" does not appear to be a correct explanation of Roy's ideas. Norman D. Palmer, *The Indian Political System*, p. 185.

78. The Radical Democratic Party, founded by Roy in 1940 took part in the election held in 1945. In the election Roy denounced the Congress as a Fascist party and claimed that the Radical Democratic party was the only party of the down-trodden people of India. In the election the party was miserably defeated.

untenable. The origin of the concept of politics without power and party can be logically traced to the earlier ideas of Roy. It has already been mentioned that when he came to India in 1930, experience led him to conclude that subjective factors or ideas of the people were of greater significance for the revolution than the objective economic force. Consequently, he started a Renaissance Movement in the country in order to bring about a revolution in the ideas and outlook of the people. These conclusions were reinforced by his experience of the war. He observed that the people of Western Europe fought Fascism owing more to ideological convictions and loyalty to cultural values than to any economic considerations. As a result, in his politics human ideas and cultural values became more prominent than economic or institutional changes. Ideas and values have little relation with power, and, therefore, in 1946 Roy developed the idea of a political party without the objective of coming to power. Later on, he realised that a political party is formed precisely to capture power, and, therefore, a group of people who disclaimed power should not organise themselves into a party. So the party was dissolved in 1948 and the idea of politics without power and party crystallised itself in Roy's mind.<sup>79</sup> In view of this logical consistency in the evolution of Roy's thought any attempt to explain his concept of partyless politics by any psychological factor is uncalled for. In this connection we may refer to the evolution of Sri Aurobindo's thought-process. For some time the ideas of spiritualism and those of political extremism ran parallel in his mind but gradually the former became prominent and ultimately he gave up the practice of politics in the usual sense. His spiritualism was not, simply a mere sublimation of his desire to escape arrest by the police. Rabindra Nath Tagore also participated in the political movement of the country during the stormy days of the anti-partition agitation in Bengal in 1905, but experience disillusioned him and he withdrew from agitational politics and devoted himself to constructive social work. This change in Tagore's policy cannot be explained—though it was so misinterpreted by some—simply in terms of a defeatist

79. In 1946 the Radical Democratic Party in its national conference held in Bombay adopted New Humanism as its philosophy and gave up all attempts to capture power. In 1948 at the Calcutta Conference the party was dissolved and the Radical Humanist Movement was inaugurated.



mentality on his part. Mahatma Gandhi also asked for the dissolution of the Congress Party and its conversion into the Lok Sevak Sangha. These facts are mentioned just to emphasise the point that politics without power and party is not wholly unknown in the history of modern Indian political thought. The politics of spiritualism, the politics of service and the politics of education rather than the politics of power were conceived by some of the best luminaries in the firmament of modern Indian political thought. One writer has aptly pointed out that "India's political life is frequently characterised by what has been called a 'renunciation of power', a phenomenon which manifests itself in a variety of ways".<sup>80</sup>

The tragic experience of the Russian Revolution was possibly a potent factor leading to the rise of his concept of politics without party. Roy expected that the Soviets under the Russian Constitution would raise democracy to a higher level and the People's Committee was conceived by Roy in the image of the Soviet. But the experiment with the new type of organised democracy in Russia was defeated by the Communist Party which monopolised all power. The party stood in the way of the rise of a new type of democracy in Russia, and this experience might have influenced his thoughts in favour of politics without party.

The inadequacies of parliamentary democracy and the evils of the party system mentioned by Roy cannot possibly be denied. In an election, the people—particularly in the under-developed countries like India—play only a passive role. The candidates are selected by the parties without any consultation with the people, the election campaign is conducted wholly by parties and after election the representatives are not required to maintain, at least by law, any relation with the electorate. The people only cast votes in favour of a particular candidate and that is the only role of the Demos. One may legitimately refuse to call it Democracy proper—a government of the people, by the people and for the people. The evils of the party system have drawn the attention of many scholars. Maurice Duverger after an exhaustive analysis of the methods followed by the political parties concluded that "the organisation of political parties is certainly not in conformity with orthodox notions

80. Marcus F. Franda, *"The Political Idioms of Atulya Ghose"*, *Asian Survey*, VI (August, 1966), p. 420.

of democracy".<sup>81</sup> He has shown how the parties try to control their members in the legislature and adopt various measures so that the members of the electorate may not exercise any control over them. Under the influence of the party system, the Parliament, he said, has ceased to be the representative of the people. He writes: "There is no longer a dialogue between the elector and the representative, the nation and parliament: a third party has come between them radically modifying the nature of their relations".<sup>82</sup>

There is no denying the fact that the ideal of democracy—a government of the people and by the people—has not been fully realised through representative government and the party system. But the question is—Is there any better practical alternative? In other words, as Roy himself has put it,—Is Democracy (Government of the People and by the People) possible?<sup>83</sup> Maurice Duverger has answered the question in the negative and has written that "the formula 'Government of the people, by the people' must be replaced by this formula 'Government of the people by an elite sprung from the people'".<sup>84</sup> But Roy tried to answer the question in the affirmative and he offered an alternative.

Dr Dhar in his attempt to support Roy's view on the party system writes that the party system in Parliamentary government is more or less an accident of history. He seems to suggest that the party system arose in Britain as a result of the long struggle between the King and Parliament. The parties, he maintains, have no necessary relation with democracy as such but it was accepted by all democratic countries slavishly. He writes: "The King had his supporters inside Parliament too, and from the very outset it became the contending ground for two parties—one swearing loyalty to the King and the other to the people. They were respectively known as Cavaliers and Roundheads. After the restoration of Charles II their names changed to Tories and Whigs. The character of parties has since undergone sufficient changes but the basic pattern has remained almost the same. We are now accustomed to it and cannot think otherwise although there is no reason to suppose why a mere accident of

81. Maurice Duverger, *Political Parties: their organisation and activity in the modern state*, p. 422.

82. *Ibid.*, p. 353.

83. RRR, II, p. 279.

84. Maurice Duverger, *op. cit.*, p. 425.

history should be taken to be causally related to it".<sup>85</sup> Roy however never suggested such an explanation about the origin of political parties. He mentioned two factors which made democracy in the modern age indirect and based upon the party system. Of these, one refers to the institutional and the other to the human aspect of the problem.

Owing to the enormous size of the population of the present state the founders of modern democracy found it impossible to practise it literally and the doctrine of representative government was conceived as the only way out of the impasse. Political parties gradually arose for the efficient and harmonious working of Representative Democracy. A well-organised party system is necessary for a stable executive in the cabinet form of government. The presidential form of government also requires a close harmony between the President and the Legislature and this can be ensured by the party system. Thus Roy concluded that political parties were "instruments devised mainly for the smooth functioning of the political apparatus of parliamentary democracy".<sup>86</sup> In a democracy, a political party is an extra-constitutional growth which arose only for the practical convenience of the working of representative democracy.

Another factor which, according to Roy, contributed to the rise of Representative Democracy and the party system was lack of faith in the ability of the people to exercise sovereign power in the actual administration of the country. "Theoretically, sovereignty belonged equally to all the citizens; but only a few were qualified to wield the sovereign power to rule, or even be conscious of it. Under such circumstances the doctrine of popular sovereignty could not but be reduced to a mere abstraction, indeed a legal fiction. The undeniable fact of the greatly uneven intellectual and cultural development of the community justified the practice of the delegation of sovereignty by the people at large to a few qualified to administer public affairs who thus usurped the sovereignty of the people".<sup>87</sup> In spite of the doctrine of popular sovereignty it was held that only a few are capable of ruling the country and the people must choose their leaders from these superior few. Under such circumstances democracy was bound to remain a mere formality and no attempt was made to realise it in practice.

85. Dr Niranjana Dhar, *op. cit.*, p. 176.

86. PPP, p. 101.

87. RH, p. 24.

The success of real democracy and the realisation of popular sovereignty will in practice depend upon the solution of these two problems. Let us first explain the solution suggested by Roy and later we shall see how far it is acceptable. First let us discuss how he tried to solve the institutional difficulty.

In order to solve the institutional problem, Roy advocated the introduction of direct democracy even in the modern big states with large populations. His objective was to keep the people always vested with power and that was, according to him, the only guarantee for democracy. He wrote : "To be real, democracy must be direct, government must be under the direct control of the people. Is that possible ? That is the problem before the political thinkers of our time".<sup>88</sup>

The problem is to devise an institutional framework in which the ideal of peoples' sovereignty would be realised in modern big states without any delegation of power to the representatives. Roy visualised such an institutional form to which he gave the name Radical Democracy or Organised Democracy. It is called Organised Democracy because the basic unit of this democratic structure is not the atomised individuals but the people of a locality organised in what is called 'People's Committee'. One cardinal drawback of the system of representative democracy and the philosophy of liberalism, according to Roy, is that it is based upon the individual in a scattered atomised existence. In a large society an individual alone cannot exercise his sovereign power whatever may be his right in theory. The concept of atomised individualism has destroyed the idea of popular sovereignty "because no single individual can think of exercising his sovereign power and that realisation has grown as social structure has become more and more complex".<sup>89</sup> The sovereign right of an individual, he maintained, becomes meaningful only when he is given the opportunity to exercise it effectively along with others in a small organised unit. Roy, therefore, proposed that the unit of the really democratic state should not be single helpless individuals, but small groups which he called People's Committees.<sup>90</sup> He did not indicate anything specifically about the territorial size or population basis of the People's Committee apart from suggesting that the number of members of a People's Committee would be one-fiftieth of the

88. PPP, p. 67.

89. *Ibid.*, p. 56.

90. BC, p. 152.

total number of voters in the locality.<sup>91</sup> These People's Committees would function, on the one hand, as units of local self-government, and, on the other and more importantly, they would function as 'local republics'<sup>92</sup> controlling and guiding the entire state machinery. Roy tried to realise the ideal of direct democracy in the modern large states through these People's Committees.

The People's Committees would nominate candidates to seek election to the state assemblies and the national parliament. After election these candidates would remain responsible to the People's Committees and would be guided by them and not by any political party. They must maintain a close contact with the People's Committees, inform the people of all their problems and carry the decisions of the People's Committees to the state assembly or to the national parliament. The majority view of the constituency (which presumably would include a number of People's Committees) would thus be truly reflected in the assemblies and parliament, and consequently law would be a true index of public opinion. Under this scheme the People's Committees would exercise real power and the representatives in the Assemblies and Parliament would be simply their spokesmen. The state thus would be reduced to the position of a clearing house of information only.<sup>93</sup> Explaining his scheme, Roy wrote : "And at the election time, when all parties come and offer their candidates, the People's Committees may decide to vote for none of those party candidates but elect one from among themselves as their candidate and the people will vote for him. The person who will be thus elected and go to the parliament will not be responsible to any existing political party machinery. He will be and remain responsible to his local democracy, of which he himself is a part; he will be directly responsible to the people who sent him to the Parliament; he will not have to act on the behests and discipline of any extraneous authority and he will have to report to and inform his fellow citizens in his constituency about all his actions and the problems of the wider community, and take his mandate from them alone in all matters and act accordingly to his best ability and conscience."<sup>94</sup> Apart from the control exercised through its representatives the People's

91. M. N. Roy, *Constitution of India—A Draft*, Article 6, p. 16.

92. RRR, II, p. 280.

93. PPP, p. 84.

94. *Ibid.*, p. 60.

Committee would have the power of recall, initiative and referendum.<sup>95</sup> Under such conditions every citizen would be informed and consulted about the affairs of the state and thus the state would become coterminous with society.<sup>96</sup> Roy therefore stood for the capture of power not by a party but by People's Committees whose country-wide network would embrace the entire people.<sup>97</sup>

The successful working of the constitution of direct democracy described above would require abiding political interest and a high level of political consciousness on the part of the citizens. Is it reasonable to expect such a high level of political consciousness from the entire adult population of the country? Roy's concept of human nature led him to offer an optimistic answer to this question. Modern scientific knowledge, he argued, has proved that every human being, as a biological unit, is endowed with the same basic potentialities of development,<sup>98</sup> and, therefore, any distinction between the rulers and the ruled, between the leaders and the followers, has no ultimate validity. Every man is rational but owing to various factors, already referred to in another chapter, man has forgotten his own nature. If he is again made conscious of his essential human attributes, he would naturally develop himself as a rational and moral being and Roy was convinced that this would make direct democracy possible.

The main problem of democracy was, therefore, to make men conscious of their innate rationality, and education was the only way to it. The aim of education, as conceived by Roy, is to make man conscious of his own nature—his rationality and urge for freedom. By education he, therefore, did not mean primary education or even conventional higher or scientific education. "What is needed", he said, "is a different kind of education, an education which will not be imparted with the purpose of maintaining any given status quo, but with the sole purpose of making the individuals of a community conscious of their potentialities, help them to think rationally and judge for themselves and promote their critical faculties by applying it to all problems confronting them".<sup>99</sup> Education for demo-

95. M. N. Roy, *Constitution of India—a Draft*, Article 8 (d, e, f, g), p. 17.

96. PPP, p. 61.

97. BC, p. 121.

98. RH, p. 25.

99. PPP, p. 59.

cracy must give man faith in himself, and he must be made conscious that the social order is his own creation and therefore it is within his power to create a new social system. Without this faith man would never be able to create a new society and in this lack of faith lies, according to Roy, the root of the present crisis of human civilization.<sup>100</sup> Self-reliant individuals alone can build up a true democratic structure, and to have self-confidence man must liberate himself from the clutches of the Divine Providence as well as the modern secular God called the Mass.<sup>101</sup> Education alone, in Roy's opinion, can create conditions favourable for the practice of democracy and that was why he believed that the new humanist political practice must begin as a cultural movement. He, therefore, stood for a new Renaissance, a philosophical revolution without which, he said, "no social change in the direction of greater freedom is possible".<sup>102</sup>

With the spread of education and the rise of enlightened and discriminating individuals in large numbers the spiritually free men and women would, Roy expected, naturally come at the helm of public affairs, because they "will command the respect of an intelligent public and be recognised as the leaders of society".<sup>103</sup> But before the rise of intelligent and discriminat-

100. *Ibid.*, p. 131.

101. *Ibid.*, pp. 59, 112.

102. *Ibid.*, p. 140.

103. NH, p. 45. Explaining the meaning of spiritually free or detached individuals Roy wrote : "in proportion as man feels that he has the power to resist the various temptations of life, to that extent he is spiritually free" (RRR, II, p. 271). A spiritually free man must be, Roy asserted, beyond the corrupting influence of power. Man, according to Roy, may attain the status of spiritual freedom by becoming conscious of his own rational and moral nature. Roy's concept of 'spiritually free individuals' has, it is obvious, no relation with religion or transcendental philosophy. He described the urge for spiritual freedom as "the striving to feel that man is a free agent, that he can act according to his judgement, and is capable of discriminating good from evil and right from wrong without being haunted by the preoccupation that he is helplessly at the mercy of some capricious super-human power" (RRR, II, p. 297). Roy's concept of spiritually free or detached individuals is similar to the Platonic concept of philosopher kings and Roy himself said that the idea of detached individuals may be traced back to Plato (BC, p. 77). His idea of 'spiritually free individuals' must however be differentiated from the concept of Superman held by Sri Aurobindo or Nietzsche. Aurobindo gave a supra-rational connotation to the idea of superman and emphasised an inward gnostic transformation leading to the transmutation of human

ing citizens in large numbers such people cannot come into prominence because "politics as it is practised today repels them".<sup>104</sup> Prior to the rise of the rational and moral society some special arrangement was recommended by Roy in order to bring the spiritually free individuals to participate in public affairs. He suggested that in the transitional stage the second chamber in the Federal Assembly, called by him the Council of State, should be formed on the basis of selection "representing men of science, intelligence, integrity, wisdom and moral excellence".<sup>105</sup> Each professional group—engineers, economists, scientists, medical men, jurists, historians and others would recommend a specific number for membership of the Council of State. The head of the State would nominate them along with, if necessary, some others equally qualified though not formally attached to any particular group. This Council of State would be given the power of planning the development of society in all branches—economic, health, education, culture, and of guiding and supervising the execution of the plans.<sup>106</sup> Roy changed his idea, as we shall later see, on state planning but he persisted in his view of placing the executive power of the state under the control of free individuals. "Spiritually free individuals in power will", he believed, "smash all chains of slavery and usher in freedom for all".<sup>107</sup>

The technique of social change, based on education, suggested by Roy, is entirely different from the traditional political method. In usual political practice the political party and the state power are considered vital instruments to bring about social change. But both are excluded in the methodology of Roy who tried to leave the beaten track and blaze a new trail in the field of social engineering. We have already explained the reasons why he gave up the party system. It is undemocratic and immoral and all its evils follow from its attempt to capture political power. Therefore, along with the party Roy gave up the politics of power as well. He characterised his system of political practice as 'politics without power'. He believed that values to divine values. Nietzsche's superman represents the qualities of master morality—energy, power, pride etc. Roy's spiritually free man is, on the other hand, characterised mainly by intellectual development, rational discrimination and spontaneous moral sense.

104. RH, p. 40.

105. NH, p. 46.

106. *Ibid.*, pp. 46-47.

107. NH, p. 49.



politics can be practised without the organisational form of the party and without any attempt to capture state power.

The politics which Roy wanted to practise had mainly two objectives, namely, peoples' education and peoples' organisation. We have already referred to the educational aspect and it should be pointed out that, according to Roy, a political party cannot undertake this task effectively. The first objective of a political party is to come to power and therefore it is more interested in indoctrinating the people with its ideas than in their real education. "Being involved in the game of power", Roy pointed out, "it has to play it according to the rules, and objective political education of the people might be a means to defeat the end of coming to power".<sup>108</sup> Apart from this educational task the main purpose of Roy's politics was to organise the local people in People's Committees and to encourage them to solve their own problems by their cooperative efforts instead of depending upon the Government helplessly. The popular tendency of depending upon the government for the solution of the problems would, Roy believed, undermine the democratic character of the society by promoting a feeling of helplessness among the people on the one hand and creating the conditions favourable for the rise of state authoritarianism on the other. Explaining this point Roy observed: "So long as the people want their problem to be solved for them, they must be prepared to obey, to follow blindly, to be regimented. On the contrary, if they want freedom, they must be declaring that as human beings they can do whatever they expect others to do for them".<sup>109</sup> The people, trying to solve their problems by their own cooperative efforts, would increasingly assume the functions of government and thereby lay the foundation of the government of the people and by the people.<sup>110</sup>

The new political practice suggested by Roy was given by him the name 'Humanist politics'. It is humanist because, as he himself puts it, it tried to introduce 'the human element into public affairs' or gave 'the human individual a prominent place in political practice'.<sup>111</sup> Individual human beings rather than 'impersonal forces and factors' are given decisive significance in this school of politics. In the traditional political method institu-

108. PPP, p. 101.

109. NH, p. 107.

110. PPP, p. 63.

111. M. N. Roy, *Humanist Politics*, p. 1.

tions are more emphasized than man himself. Man, according to Roy's social philosophy, created all institutions of the society and therefore new social institutions can be created only by new men inspired by new ideas. Rational and moral men alone, Roy said, can constitute a rational and moral society.<sup>112</sup> A party in power may create some new institutions in the society by legislative measures but such institutions imposed from above would not actually usher in a new society. He wrote : "A few good and intelligent people can think of some very good new institutions, but if these institutions will be run by human beings whose ideas are not so new and not so good, they will not produce the expected result".<sup>113</sup> The moral sense of man is inherent in him and state laws imposed from above cannot make men moral,<sup>114</sup> and, therefore, a moral society cannot be created through legislation. A really democratic society would be created only if the democratic mentality is developed among the people, and therefore, democracy, Roy concluded, cannot come into being by passing of laws nor can it be imposed from above. Roy's humanist politics is based upon the principle that the renewal of man is the beginning of the reconstruction of society.

Roy's concept of democracy without delegation of power and the party system and also the ways he suggested to realise it have been explained. Dr Dhar accepts the scheme in full and considers that it has solved "the baffling problem of power".<sup>115</sup> Dr Prakash Chandra believes that "given their acceptance by a large majority of the people, the feasibility of these proposals cannot be questioned altogether",<sup>116</sup> though he thinks that a successful realisation of Roy's idea of direct democracy is "open to doubt"<sup>117</sup>. Roy's plea of democracy without parties is considered by him as "a novel and a bold suggestion"<sup>118</sup> and he writes approvingly : "This observation of his [politics without parties] is drawn from and is based on his experience of forty years of active political life in many countries of the world"<sup>119</sup>. It is however necessary to go into a detailed and critical examination of Roy's scheme in order to ascertain its real worth.

112. PPP, p. 149.

113. *Ibid.*, p. 57.

114. *Ibid.*, p. 149.

115. Dr Niranjan Dhar, *op. cit.*, p. 172.

116. Dr Prakash Chandra, *op. cit.*, p. 200.

117. *Ibid.*, p. 201.

118. *Ibid.*,

119. *Ibid.*, p. 186.

Roy hoped that his system would realise the ideal of direct democracy even in modern large states. But the Peoples' Committee, the lowest unit of the pyramidal structure of the Radical Democratic State, would not include all the adults of the locality. In his Draft Constitution Roy proposed that the number of the members of the People's Committee would be one fiftieth of the total number of voters in the locality. Thus the people who would remain outside the People's Committee—98 per cent of the total number of voters—would have no direct role to play even in the Radical Democratic State proposed by Roy. Democracy, therefore, would still remain indirect and representative.

Secondly, there is no reason to believe that Radical Democratic State would remain free from the evils of the party system. The parties—obviously they could not be banned in a real democracy—would still try to dominate the People's Committee so that their views might prevail. Responsibility of the representatives to the People's Committees would simply turn the latter into hot-beds of party intrigue and strife. The difference between the capture of power by a party and the capture of power by the People's Committee would be of little practical significance because the parties would still try to capture power through the People's Committees. The parties might not come into prominence in a People's Committee or Panchayat dealing simply with the problems of local self-government but if they were given the right to control the State Assemblies and Parliament the parties would surely try to dominate these bodies and the net-work of People's Committees dominated by parties would make the evils of the party system all the more glaring. The whole scheme might ultimately amount to a change from the frying pan into the fire. Political parties may actually disappear only if the People's Committees can work on the basis of a consensus. The Sarvodaya philosophy tries to do away with the parties on the assumption that a consensus is both possible and desirable, but Roy's Radical Humanism is not very clear and categorical on this point. If differences of opinion on political matters are taken as natural, political parties are bound to emerge, whatever may be the form of government.

Thirdly, the scheme of Organised Democracy is based on a false psychology. Since man is not simply a political animal, it is idle to expect that the people throughout the country would take a living and sustained interest in the political problems of

the country. On this problem H. A. Deane's observations in his book *The Political Ideas of Harold J. Laski* are worth quoting here: "While it may be natural for a student of politics to feel that other men would, if only they had adequate knowledge, leisure and opportunities, share his passion for politics, the assumption is psychologically hardly more valid than a poet's belief that if men were given proper training and adequate opportunities they would naturally devote most of their time and energy to the composition of verse"<sup>120</sup>. Prof. Robert Michels, Vilfredo Pareto and many others have shown by a minute study of social organisations that in spite of rights and privileges a democratic organisation tends to become oligarchical in character because most people do not take an active interest in democracy, as they have neither the ability nor the inclination for it. Hilaire Belloc has shown that even the industrial masses of our times suffer from the tendency to hero-worship and instead of exercising power and taking responsibility themselves they like to place responsibility on a single person and expect him to look after their interest. Undaunted by the warnings of these gloomy prophets, Roy pursued his ideal of radical democracy because he believed in the possibility of human development and the rise of a better type of man. All persons are endowed with equal potentialities and therefore everybody can develop himself equally. Failure in the past, therefore, could not make him pessimistic about the future. Roy's assumption is however open to serious doubts. There is a growing opinion among a group of scientists that variation in the achievement of different persons is largely due to hereditary factors—due to the nature of the native germ plasm. The recent psychological method of measuring general intelligence shows that on the basis of general intelligence people can be divided into various groups and many are of the opinion that these differences are hereditary. If these theories are accepted Roy's assumption that all human beings are endowed with equal potentialities would become untenable. The present state of our knowledge of genetics and eugenics is inadequate and on the basis of this one cannot be dogmatic about its political and social implications. But even if men are endowed with equal potentialities their aptitudes would still be different and it is idle to expect that all would take a living and sustained interest in political affairs.

120. H. A. Deane, *Political Ideas of Harold Laski*, p. 63

Fourthly, the practical difficulties of the scheme are overwhelming. It would be impossible to run any government in a big country if all the bills were to be referred to the different Peoples' Committees throughout the country which might propose different amendments difficult to reconcile with one another. Many of the problems of the government are very complex and intricate in nature and require expert knowledge for their full comprehension. Even many members of parliament are not competent to deal with them effectively. Therefore, it would be unwise, if not positively dangerous, to entrust the Peoples' Committees with the supreme legal power to give their verdict on all bills and measures proposed by the government. Loyalty to democracy must not overwhelm our sense of realism. A party saddled with the responsibility of running the administration may take a long-distance view and judge a measure from the standpoint of the national interest but the local People's Committees without the actual responsibility of governing the country are more likely to judge a measure from the point of view of their immediate and local interests. In the absence of the party in the legislature, it would not be possible to form a stable executive confident of legislative support. In the Presidential form of Government it is the party that serves as an indirect link between the Executive and the Legislative departments and its disappearance would lead to the constant danger of administrative deadlock. Even in the proposed Radical Democracy the State would co-ordinate the activities of different social institutions and the Government, therefore, must have at least in broad outline a uniform and consistent policy to be followed in every sector of social life. If the Government is composed of individuals having no common policy and programme it would lead the country to chaos. A government must start with an agreed comprehensive policy and every issue cannot be judged in isolation. In that case government policy would have no coherence. It is the party organisation which enables the Government to follow a coherent and consistent policy. Chander Prakash Bhambhri, therefore, in an article on Roy's New Humanism has rightly characterised his concept of partyless politics as facile, impracticable and dangerous<sup>121</sup>. It is dangerous because, as the writer says, the doctrine, if practised, would result in totalitarianism. Partyless politics will lead to

121. Indian Journal of Political Science, Vol. XXI, No. 3, July-September, 1960, p. 255.

chaos and chaos is the breeding ground of dictatorship. A distinction between the legal and the political sovereign must be recognised in modern states. Measures should be taken so that the latter may influence the former but to identify the two in the legal and constitutional structure would be dangerous even if practicable. In a democracy the legal sovereign must derive power from the people but cannot entrust the people with power in day-to-day administration.

Lastly, Roy's scheme of assigning special power to the spiritually free individuals in the transitional period is also open to criticism. This scheme is beset with almost insurmountable practical difficulties. How are the spiritually free and detached individuals to be selected? Roy's suggestion that the selection of such persons would be on the recommendation of the professional groups is not likely to realise his purpose. By such methods the state may get the assistance of professional experts and persons of great intellectual eminence but not necessarily of spiritually free and incorruptible individuals.

By pointing out the shortcomings of Parliamentary Democracy and the evils of the party system Roy has rendered one useful service. He has drawn the attention of many towards these problems which may encourage efforts to mitigate them without however destroying the system itself. In an article on Partyless Democracy Acharya J. B. Kripalani remarks that most of the defects of the party system are not inherent in it but are as much curable as those of any other human institution<sup>122</sup>. Dr Sharma also holds that the criticism of the party system made by Roy "points to the necessity of removing these defects"<sup>122a</sup>. With the growth of political consciousness among the people and of a democratic outlook and conviction among the parties, these evils may certainly be reduced appreciably. In the underdeveloped areas the evils of the party system became more prominent mainly because of the absence of democratic traditions and convictions among the people. That is possibly the reason why the concept of partyless Democracy has developed in such areas. If the people of a constituency—organised in local committees like the Panchayats in India today—take the initiative in conducting elections by organising meetings and inviting the different candidates to address the people, much of

122. Acharya J. B. Kripalani, "Partyless Democracy", *Career and Courses* (Vol. XV, No. 10), p. 879.

122a. B. S. Sharma, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

58. RH, p. 28.

the immoral practices connected with elections may presumably be reduced. Direct democracy cannot be practised in the modern large states and therefore one must remain satisfied with the representative system. Bertrand De Jouvenel has very aptly pointed out that whatever might be the merits of democracy of the Athenian model we must "reconcile ourselves to the fact that participationist democracy cannot be restored in very large-scale organisations"<sup>123</sup>. But in spite of the indirect character of democracy, provision should be made for frequent contact between the representative and the voters of his constituency so that the latter may not feel completely ignored after the election and the politically interested and conscious elements of the constituency may enlighten the representative with their views and may secure information from him about the attitude of the Government on various problems. This will make democracy more lively and meaningful. The centralisation of power in the hands of a few is undoubtedly contrary to the spirit of democracy but the principle of decentralisation can be secured only by vesting the maximum possible freedom to the lower levels of administration in the village, district and the state. The participationist democracy may however be built up on the local dealing with local problems.

Roy's view that education is the precondition of democracy would readily be accepted by many. But it gives rise at least to two significant questions—what are the agencies to spread education among the people? Secondly, what should be the content of education? Roy thought that neither the political parties nor the government can undertake the task. The parties would try to indoctrinate the people with their ideas and the Government would create a spirit of conformism among the people in order to maintain the status quo<sup>124</sup>. A political party would, it is true, try to convert the people to its own opinion but in a democracy where there are several parties holding different views, party propaganda has no doubt an educational value. A government with a liberal democratic outlook can and does promote general education among the people without any ulterior purpose of regimenting the public mind. The efforts of the government and the parties may be reinforced by individual and cooperative

123. Bertrand De Jouvenel, "What is Democracy", in *Democracy in the New States* (Rhodes Seminar Papers, published by Prabhakar Padhye for the Congress for Cultural Freedom, New Delhi, India), p. 39.

124. PPP, pp. 101, 118-19.

endeavours but to exclude the former agencies completely appears to be dogmatic.

Many social thinkers have laid emphasis on man's education rather than on institutional changes as the starting point of social reconstruction. The whole programme of Community Development is based upon it. Many religious thinkers have tried to bring about the kingdom of heaven on earth through the divine illumination of men. W. E. Hocking believes that the success of democracy depends upon the religious transformation of human nature. P. A. Sorokin similarly holds that to be fruitful, the institutional changes must be preceded by a new spiritual culture. Nicolas Berdyaev also stands for a religious revival of human culture as the essential precondition of social progress. According to Sri Aurobindo, the spiritual transformation of man must precede social change. He held that rational and intellectual education alone would not lead to a better future and he stood for the unfoldment of the hidden power of the human soul—a source of authority higher than reason. Vivekananda and Gandhiji also stood for the spiritual development of man. The Sarvodaya Movement carrying the Gandhian tradition and fortified by the socialist experience of Jayaprakash Narayan tries to bring about in India a social revolution without legislation. Rabindranath Tagore, who gave so much stress on education in his social and political theory, developed an elaborate theory of education laying emphasis not only on the education of the intellect but also of human emotions and spirit. Roy gave education only an intellectual content and tried thereby to make man conscious of his potentialities, his rationality and the urge for freedom. But will the nourishment of the intellect alone lead to such moral development of man as to usher in a rational and moral society? Experience at least does not warrant optimism. Man possesses not simply a 'head' but also a 'heart' and education which cannot reach the human heart cannot change human conduct. Roy did not develop a detailed educational theory like Rousseau or Gandhi, though education formed a pivotal part in his social and political theory. Moreover, as a technique of social change, education, it may be mentioned here, should be considered not in opposition to legislation but as its supplement. The limitations of legislation are obvious. Laws have their loopholes and in the absence of active popular support and co-operation a law may remain a dead letter. To be effective legislation must be rooted in enlightened public



opinion and education is the only way to create it. Social progress is a complex function of many variables and a theory of social change must take all the factors into consideration.

In order to realise the democratic ideal of the sovereignty of the individual, Roy discarded not only the principle of the delegation of power and the party system but also the cult of nationalism. Nationalism, according to Roy, corrupted democracy and under its influence the practice of democracy, he held, ran counter to the philosophical principle of individualism. "The misalliance with nationalism put into the concept of democracy a collectivist connotation. The Nation-state, whether republican or monarchist, claimed to represent a collective ego, which was morally as well as legally entitled to ignore the comforts and convenience of individual citizens. The nation became a metaphysical concept; it was greater than the sum total of its component units—individual human beings. Democracy broke away from its humanist tradition".<sup>125</sup> According to Roy democracy lost its libertarian significance by its association with nationalism. He pointed out that "even the classic land of 'rugged individualism', the United States of America, is no exception. America is greater than the greatest of the Americans; the so-called American way of life means the obligation of all individual Americans to conform with the will of the fiction of a collective ego. The Nation-state, in practice, makes no greater concession to the concept of individual freedom than the class-state of the Communists, and also of the Socialists. And no modern democratic state has as yet outgrown nationalist collectivism".<sup>126</sup>

Roy, however, appears to have misinterpreted the spirit of nationalism and exaggerated its danger. A Nation-State, he maintained, is no more democratic than a communist state. But neither history nor logic would bear testimony in his favour. Britain or the U.S.A., to take the two leading examples, have not given up nationalism to realise democracy (which may not be full-fledged). Nationalism is more a feeling and an urge than an ideology. Nationalism is given different contents by people having different ideas. The Fascists used German nationalism for their totalitarian and aggressive purposes. Fichte and Hegel prepared the ground for this. But to be a democrat a German need not renounce nationalism. The doctrine of

125. RH, pp. 24-25.

126. *Ibid.*, pp. 20-21.

national sovereignty, it is true, is incompatible with world co-operation but an encroachment on national sovereignty would not imply an end of nationalism. Nationalism as a social and associational bond may survive the concept of the national sovereign state. Aurobindo, Mahatma Gandhi and many other thinkers of the present age found no essential contradiction between nationalism and universalism. They believed that nationalism may be given a noble content which would accelerate rather than retard the advent of the age of universal co-operation. Nationalism is a double edged sword. It may be utilised for parochial, chauvinistic and totalitarian purposes, and it may also be treated as a vital stage in the social evolution of man from the primitive tribal life to world unity. Roy's opposition to nationalism was extended to an opposition to internationalism as well because the latter 'presupposes the existence of autonomous National States'.<sup>127</sup> A World Government, as a matter of fact, can be conceived only as a federation of the existing National States. Roy stood for a cosmopolitan commonwealth of free men, which, he said, would be a spiritual community not limited by the boundaries of national states.<sup>128</sup> World brotherhood undoubtedly presupposes a world outlook but the spiritual community must have a political expression in which the nation states, as integral parts of the World Federation, would inevitably play a significant role. A federation of today does not imply annihilation of component states. Similarly the World Federation can be made feasible only on the basis of the existing nation states.

The main objective of Roy's political philosophy was, as has been already mentioned, to realise the principle of the sovereignty of the people and the ideal of individual freedom in actual practice. This naturally brought economics within the purview of his philosophy. Like many other thinkers of the modern age he felt that one of the important factors that led to the miscarriage of the ideal of democracy in practice was economic. According to him, the free enterprise of the liberals and the state control of the socialists were both inadequate for safeguarding individual freedom. The concept of the economic man and the doctrine of 'laissez-faire' falsified the ideal of the individual freedom. The liberals conceived man as an economic being propelled by economic interest, which was considered to

127. NH, p. 37.

128. RRR, II, p. 310.

be the only incentive to human action. Roy pointed out that "the concept of the economic man negatives the liberating doctrine of individualism. The economic man is bound to be a slave or a slave-holder".<sup>129</sup> In liberalism individual freedom implied the freedom to pursue one's own economic interest which, in the context of the competitive economy and gross economic inequality, led to the exploitation of man by man. The practice of the laissez-faire economy thus "reduced the individual to a helpless position"<sup>130</sup> and this helplessness killed the spirit of democracy and created an atmosphere favourable for the rise of collectivism. The experience of Russia led Roy to conclude that communism was no better than state capitalism so far as the ideal of individual freedom was concerned. The extension of state control would necessarily lead to the concentration of power in the state and thus jeopardise the freedom of the individual, but there was no guarantee that this power would be used to end economic exploitation. The replacement of private ownership by State ownership did not usher in a new civilization in Russia. Roy, therefore, concluded: "The abolition of private property, state ownership of the means of production, and planned economy do not by themselves end exploitation of labour, nor lead to an equal distribution of wealth".<sup>131</sup>

Roy's idea of limited government goes obviously against the theory of Democratic Socialism and also against the concept of the Welfare State. In a letter to Lewis Corey, Roy categorically explained his view thus: "But I have given up socialism also! Socialism is ineffective communism. Welfare State is a paternalist dictatorship. You cannot have socialism in a pluralist society, which you advocate".<sup>132</sup> Apart from the technique and methods of coming to power, there is, according to Roy, little difference between socialism and communism. Both consider private property as the cause of all evils and advocate a programme of nationalization and state ownership as the remedy. Any scheme to use state power for promoting social good and public welfare,

129. Principle No. 13.

130. *RRR*, II, p. 255.

131. *MH*, p. 40. State ownership, according to Roy, includes all the evils of capitalism but "only the relative freedom of bourgeois society is lost in the bargain". Synopses prepared by M. N. Roy on the eve of the Study Camp in 1946, p. 23.

132. The letter of M. N. Roy (dated April 6, 1952) to Lewis Corey is preserved in the M. N. Roy Archives, Indian Renaissance Institute, Dehradun.

Roy feared, would ultimately result in the rise of totalitarianism and the denial of individual freedom. He stated: "The exorbitant price for problematical economic security and doubtful material welfare has to be paid whenever the government of a country, whether dictatorial or formally democratic, claims to be the guardian of the welfare of the people and the latter expected the government to do everything for them".<sup>133</sup> From this condition Roy thought political dictatorship, either de facto or de jure, would follow logically. If the state was to be given the responsibility for promoting social welfare, it must be armed with the requisite power which would, Roy argued, necessarily lead to the rise of state authoritarianism, though it might remain hidden behind the facade of a parliamentary structure. "Even under the democratic socialism", Roy wrote, "economic welfare must be purchased; the price is forfeiture of individual liberty and regimentation".<sup>134</sup> He thought that there was 'something fraudulent' in the concept of the welfare state. The state confers benefit upon the people with money taken from the people themselves, and for this purpose a large amount of money is spent to maintain the state bureaucracy. In Roy's words: "Money is taken out of one pocket of the worker and put into his other pocket in the form of benefits; in the process the money loses about 20-25% of its value".<sup>135</sup> He therefore tried to keep the economic life of society beyond the control of the state.

Roy's Radical Humanist philosophy thus considered both capitalism and socialism as inadequate and it stood for a third alternative which was called the Cooperative Economy. Roy wanted the economic life of society to be reorganised on the basis of mutual cooperation independent of state interference. The new economy would consist of a network of consumers' and producers' cooperatives and the economic activities of society would be conducted and coordinated by the people through these institutions<sup>136</sup>. His main objective was to apply the principle of decentralization to the economic organisation of society through these co-operatives. Like the Peoples' Committee which would serve as the basic unit of the decentra-

133. NH, p. 97.

134. Ibid., p. 98.

135. Ibid. On the same problem Ropke writes: "But this amounts merely to a transfer of purchasing power from the left-hand into the right-hand pocket, by diverting it, with tremendous wastage, through State Channels." Wilhelm Ropke, *Reflections on the Welfare State*, p. 14.

136. NH, p. 75.

lised democratic state, every locality would have its own co-operative as the nucleus of the democratic decentralised economic system. The local and regional cooperatives would look after the economic interests of the people within their territorial jurisdiction, but the cooperative communities, Roy pointed out, would not be autarchic. As the constituent units of national economy they would be interdependent and integrated in a larger co-operative community. "Every local cooperative", he pointed out, "will be able to make, for example, bricks needed for building houses; but only some will be in a position to manufacture cement. Commodities will have to be exchanged and local multipurpose cooperative societies will be integrated into one larger economic system".<sup>137</sup> The surplus from the local and regional cooperative societies would be pooled to finance the growth of industries producing on a large scale the commodities required everywhere but which could not be produced locally on a small scale. The large scale production of certain specified articles as well as the exploitation of natural resources such as mining would also be organized on a co-operative basis and they would be owned by local cooperative societies. The purpose of the production would be to raise the general standard of living of the people and there would remain no motive of exploitation of labour for private profit in the Cooperative Economy. This economy would be self-sufficient financially, though in the beginning financial assistance by the state might be necessary; but it must not imply state control or state interference which, according to Roy, is bound to breed corruption and inefficiency.<sup>138</sup>

The Cooperative Economy, Roy maintained, might develop along with the existing privately owned industries. These industries would be given the option either to remain independent and compete with the new economy or to become integrated into the Cooperative system recognising the principle of production for use. If they decide to remain independent, they would gradually, Roy believed, be wiped out because of the "impossibility to compete with a non-profit-making economy sustained by the cooperative efforts of practically the entire society".<sup>139</sup> Thus without any coercion the problem of private enterprise based on the profit motive would be solved.

The Cooperative Economy, Roy pointed out, would take

137. RH, p. 52.

138. Ibid., pp. 53-54.

139. Ibid., p. 54.

the benefit of modern science and technology but would never sacrifice the freedom of the individual in the economic organisation at the altar of technological efficiency. Modern technology has the tendency to make the unit of production so very large and complicated that individual workers are reduced to the position of cogs in the wheels of the economic machinery. But in Roy's philosophy individual freedom is the highest value and therefore he was of opinion that modern technological trends, if necessary, would have to be curbed so that they might serve the interest of man instead of swallowing them up. He wrote : "Machine should not be the Frankenstein of modern civilization. Created by man, it must subserve man's purpose—contribute to his freedom".<sup>140</sup>

Roy's views on economic planning does not appear to be very clear. The main problem before him was to reconcile planning with freedom. He wrote : "Economic democracy is no more possible in the absence of political democracy than the latter is in the absence of the former. That consideration should be borne in mind by those who make a fetish of economic planning".<sup>141</sup> He further wrote : "The crucial question is : Planning for what ? It is assumed that planned economy will guarantee the greatest good to the greatest number; in other words, it will mean equal distribution of wealth—establish social justice. In that case, it would be possible to reconcile planning with freedom".<sup>142</sup> In *New Humanism*, published in 1947 Roy entrusted the Council of State representing the professional groups with the work of planning the development of society in all branches—economic, health, education and culture.<sup>143</sup> But he later changed his view radically and tried to make the economic organisation of society independent of any state interference. In *Radical Humanism*, published in 1952, he wrote : "It is an unfounded assumption that state planning necessarily leads to economic democracy and social justice . . . . Planning may quicken the tempo of production; but it has nowhere done better than in American free enterprise. In Russia it has promoted considerable industrial progress in a relatively short time. But there also equitable, not to mention equal, distribution remains in the realm of utopia. And the status quo does not allow any

140. NH, p. 41.

141. Ibid., p. 40.

142. Ibid., pp. 40-41.

143. Ibid., p. 47.

optimism about the attainment of the ideal. In the meantime planning has resulted in economic regimentation and eclipse of liberty".<sup>144</sup> Roy completely abandoned the idea of planning the economic life through the state but it is doubtful whether he gave up the idea of planning itself. The Cooperative Economy, as outlined by Roy, cannot obviously function without an overall plan. Roy possibly had the idea of a plan prepared and executed by the Cooperatives themselves for the economic development of society.

Roy's emphasis on the decentralisation and dispersal of industries throughout the country instead of localising them in a few selected areas, and on the medium-sized mechanised industries rather than on large-scale enterprise, would go a long way to solve the problems of the 'mass' society and 'mass' culture confronting the industrialised civilization of to-day. Even in the West many leading thinkers stand for a decentralised economic order. "Our centrist civilization, which has become more and more remote from man and the human scale," Dr Wilhelm Röpke rightly points out, "has reached the point where its own continued existence is at stake".<sup>145</sup> But it is however doubtful whether the economic life of society can be made entirely independent of state interference particularly in the newly liberated countries of Asia and Africa. The attempt to reorganise the economic life of society on the basis of cooperation and mutualism is an old one and it was tried both in Europe and America. In modern Europe the anarchist and syndicalist movements aimed at reorganising the economic life of society without the interference of the state. But as an alternative to free enterprise co-operation could not succeed to any appreciable extent. Unlike the Anarchists, Roy admitted that the state must be given the right to co-ordinate the activities of different organisations of the society. This naturally would give the state a large share of economic power. Co-ordination of different social institutions presupposes more or less a common policy to be pursued by them and this policy would necessarily be determined by the state. Leslie Lipson has rightly pointed out that the modern pluralists "do modify their basic theory and make such concessions to the state that after denying admission to monism at the

144. RH, p. 54. See *Humanist Approach to Economic Development* (Indian Renaissance Institute), pp. 14-21.

145. Wilhelm Röpke, *A Humane Economy*, p. 261.

front door they let it creep in at the back".<sup>146</sup> In the underdeveloped countries of Asia and Africa the state has got a special role to play. "Asian Governments", Maurice Zinkin has rightly argued, "have to take more economic initiative than Western Governments. The facts, not socialist doctrine, make them to do so".<sup>147</sup> Before the underdeveloped countries there is a concrete ideal of modernism (in European society) which they try to imitate, may be with some differences here and there. In the West during the period of liberalism there was no such given ideal for the government to realise. When the emphasis goes to execution the state necessarily comes into prominence. Describing the special condition of Asia Maurice Zinkin writes : "No Western Government has to face the prospect of transforming its whole society. In the West the people forced family planning on the governments. The accounts of the best companies were taken as the model for the Companies Act. Private universities and grammar schools provided the model for the state's educational efforts. Before the Welfare State there were the friendly societies. And so on. The state's function is normally to generalise an idea or an institution which has already arisen spontaneously within the society. The state does not innovate. In Asia on the other hand the government must lead, or no one will. That the government is sometimes handicapped by inadequate servants and prejudiced politicians, that it is on occasion ineffective, is an argument for making it better, it cannot be an argument for doing nothing".<sup>148</sup> In the growth of democracy in the underdeveloped countries the ideal of the Welfare State appears to have a vital role to play. "The Welfare State", D. L. Hobman rightly observes, "is a compromise between the two extremes of Communism on the one hand and unbridled Individualism on the other and as such, in spite of all its imperfections, it sets a pattern for any humane and progressive society".<sup>149</sup> In the absence of popular initiative, a co-operative institution would also develop dictatorial tendencies, but a people organised locally and conscious of their democratic rights and obligations may use the Democratic Welfare State to promote their freedom without submitting to its authoritarian rule.

146. Leslie Lipson, *The Great Issues of Politics*, p. 436.

147. Maurice Zinkin, *Development for Free Asia*, p. 66.

148. *Ibid.*, pp. 72-73.

149. D. L. Hobman, *The Welfare State*, p. 1.



## NEW HUMANISM AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Roy was always a keen student of international affairs and even after he virtually retired from practical politics he retained his interest in the subject. He wrote a number of articles analysing the currents and cross-currents of international politics of the post-war period. They show the way in which he tried to apply his philosophy of New Humanism to the problems of international relations and a brief reference to this subject would enable us to judge his contribution to the basic problem of modern international politics, namely, the problem of war and peace.

The rise of the cold war was particularly distressing to him. In his communist days he found a revolutionary significance in the conflict between the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R.—it was a struggle between progress and reaction. But after he gave up Marxism altogether, the cold war appeared to him as an unmitigated and unmixed evil. The destructive potentialities of a modern nuclear war led Roy, along with many others of the present age, to the conclusion that a third world war would mean the end of the human civilization. He wrote : “One does not require a very high degree of imaginativeness to realise that another world war will have the most disastrous consequences, most probably amounting to a complete breakdown of modern civilization. The greatest possible efforts must be made to head off that threatening catastrophe”.<sup>1</sup>

In between the two groups into which the world forces were polarised, Roy preferred the U.S. bloc though he considered American democracy as inadequate. He categorically stated that “even a defective democratic order being preferable to dictatorship there is no difficulty for the lovers of liberty in choosing between Democracy and Communism”.<sup>2</sup> As an ardent advocate of individual freedom, Roy was anxious to arrest the rising tide of communism, and he considered the U.S.A. at least as a lesser evil. But he could not agree with the method adopted

1. RRR, II, p. 275.

2. M. N. Roy, “Destructive Defence”, *The Radical Humanist*, XIV (October 1, 1950), p. 461.

by the U.S.A. to check communism and observed that "to choose the lesser evil is hardly a solution of the problem".<sup>3</sup>

Roy considered the attempt of the U.S.A. to arrest the expansion of communism by the application of military forces as exceedingly dangerous. He feared that it would destroy democracy in the process. In order to make preparations for war all ideological considerations were subordinated by the U.S.A. to the overriding necessity of the military. The alliance of the U.S.A. with rulers like Syngman Rhee, Chiang Kai-Shek, Pibul Songgram, Bao Dai, the Shah of Persia, the despotic monarchs of the Arab States, General Franco and others might have a military justification, but, Roy argued, it deprived the U.S. Bloc of all democratic significance.<sup>4</sup> The policy of the U.S.A. towards Japan and Germany, dictated by the military necessity, tended to undermine the spirit of democracy.<sup>5</sup> It appeared to him that the U.S.A. was a champion more of anti-communism than of democracy and simple anti-communism, he warned, might be a prelude to Fascism.<sup>6</sup> He apprehended that the U.S. policy might antagonise the democratic countries of Europe, and he wrote that "the anti-communist campaign for the defence of democracy may be like playing Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark. The democratic countries of Western and Northern Europe may be out of it".<sup>7</sup> An effective modern war required the total mobilisation of resources and that would slow down the economic recovery of the European countries<sup>8</sup> and the considerations of war would lead to the sacrifice of political freedom as well.<sup>9</sup> The logic of total mobilisation thus

3. M. N. Roy, "Our Future", *Independent India*, XII (December 5, 1948), p. 584.

4. M. N. Roy, "Men and Machine", *The Radical Humanist*, XIV (September 24, 1950), p. 449.

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 449-450; M. N. Roy, "Destructive Defence", *The Radical Humanist*, XIV, (October 1, 1959), pp. 451, 462; M. N. Roy, "Democracy and Mass Mobilisation", *The Radical Humanist*, XIV (October 8, 1959), pp. 474, 475, 476.

6. M. N. Roy, "The Colombo Conference" (Notes of the Week), *The Radical Humanist*, XIV (January 15, 1959), p. 13.

7. M. N. Roy, "New Pivot of Western Defence", *The Radical Humanist*, XV (August 19, 1951), p. 383.

8. M. N. Roy, "The Economics of Western Defence". *The Radical Humanist*, XIV (October 29, 1959), p. 509.

9. M. N. Roy, "Destructive Defence", *The Radical Humanist*, XIV (October 1, 1950), p. 461.

would place the non-communist world on the road to a type of regimentation not different from communist totalitarianism.

Apart from its anti-democratic nature, Roy condemned the U.S. policy as essentially aggressive. He was extremely critical of the Truman Doctrine and completely ignored the communist pressure which made it necessary. The peace of the world, he wrote, would have remained undisturbed if the people of every country were allowed to determine their form of government without any intervention from outside, but the Truman Doctrine, by enabling the U.S.A. to rush to the aid to the weaker democracies, aggravates the world tension<sup>10</sup>. He condemned the Atlantic Pact as aggressive in purpose<sup>11</sup> and the American policy to finance the economic development of the backward countries was considered by him as economically sinister and politically dangerous. He condemned it as colonialism<sup>12</sup> and pointed out that the countries accepting such aid would necessarily be subjected to American political pressure<sup>13</sup>. Thus though Roy preferred American democracy to Russian communism, he was extremely critical of the American foreign policy, particularly its emphasis on military force as the way to combat communism.

As against the U.S.A. the Russian foreign policy was considered by Roy as essentially peaceful. Though the Russians were building up a formidable military power, he believed that nevertheless they would not precipitate a war. Russian policy (during the time of Stalin), according to him, was determined by the Marxist prognosis of the inevitable breakdown of capitalism which guaranteed the triumph of Communism even without war<sup>14</sup>. This faith in Marxist prediction, rather than the fear of the atom bomb, made Russia, in Roy's view, favourably disposed towards peace. Moreover he thought that Russia was trying to drive a wedge between the U.S.A. and Western Europe and was following a policy of peace in order to make the Ame-

10. M. N. Roy, "Aggression for Peace", *The Radical Humanist*, XIV (November 19, 1950), p. 546.

11. M. N. Roy, "Dis-United Nations", *The Radical Humanist*, XIII (May 1, 1949), p. 203.

12. M. N. Roy, "The Chain of Gold", *The Radical Humanist*, XIII (December 1, 1949), p. 587.

13. M. N. Roy, "Aggression for Peace", *The Radical Humanist*, XIV (November 19, 1950), p. 545.

14. M. N. Roy, "The Economics of Western Defence", *The Radical Humanist*, XIV (October 22, 1950), p. 498.

rican assistance to Europe unnecessary and thus to undermine her influence there. He described Stalin as "a man of peace"<sup>15</sup> and maintained that the Russian policy of peace of the post-Stalin era was a "continuation of the Stalinist political strategy"<sup>16</sup>.

A clear background of Roy's ideas on post-war international politics will be found in two letters written by him to Ruth Fischer<sup>17</sup>. Roy found that the American policy of militarism and alliance with the anti-democratic governments in various countries made her extremely unpopular in Asia. American policy lacked any idealism; communism could supply it for the Asian people. "Communism", he wrote to Ruth Fischer, "offers them a political idealism; to end the poverty of the masses is a strong appeal for those who had been fighting for freedom all these years"<sup>18</sup>. The popular will to resist communism can be derived only from the democratic tradition and devotion to the values of a humanist culture<sup>19</sup>. In Europe the tradition of democracy and humanist culture is strong but in Asia it is weak or almost absent in some parts and the American policy is not encouraging that tradition. The success of communism in China led Roy to conclude that foreign economic aid at the governmental level cannot be fruitful in resisting communism. After the success of communism in China Roy felt that the triumph of Communism in South East Asia was a foregone conclusion owing to the absence of any popular will to resist it. In a mood of extreme pessimism he wrote to Ruth Fischer: "Stalin is succeeding where Napoleon failed: he is conquering Europe in Asia ... In short, the whole of East Asia is lost"<sup>20</sup>. The authoritarian tradition of the eastern culture, the success of communism in China, the promise of economic betterment and the unpopularity of the U.S.A. made communism popular in Asia and as long as there will remain the chance of

15. M. N. Roy, "The Death of Stalin", *The Radical Humanist*, XVII (March 15, 1953), p. 132.

16. M. N. Roy, "Stalinism Survives Stalin", *The Radical Humanist*, XVII (April 26, 1953), p. 193.

17. The letters are dated October 23, 1949 and August 4, 1950 and they are preserved in the M. N. Roy Archives, Dehradun.

18. Letter dated 23 October, 1949.

19. M. N. Roy, "Communism in Asia", *The Radical Humanist* XVI (January 13 and January 20, 1952). The article has been produced in full in Appendix II in *China Invades India* edited by V. B. Karnik, pp. 299-309.

20. Letter dated October 23, 1949.

the further expansion of communism without war, Russia would surely try to avoid open war with the U.S.A. That was the basis of what Roy called the Russian policy of peace. In his letter to Ruth Fischer he wrote : "In Asia the democratic powers have been backing up the wrong horses. The result of the mistake is that Russia is going to conquer Asia with the active and enthusiastic help of the Asiatic masses. You have no idea how the Americans are disliked in this part of the world. The obverse is sympathy for Russia. That is the background of events in Asia"<sup>21</sup>.

Roy considered both the blocs into which the world was divided as evils and he had after all nothing to choose between the two. The world, he wrote, was "in the perilous position between the devil and the deep sea: Communist dictatorship and the American Super Imperialism ... It is not a choice between Communist dictatorship and democratic freedom but between Americanism and Russianism: financial feudalism and mechanised barbarism"<sup>22</sup>. The only way out of the impasse was found by him in a Third Force and he wrote that unless a sufficiently powerful third force appeared on the scene, a clash between the two contenders for world domination was unavoidable<sup>23</sup>. His advocacy for the Third Force was clearly evidenced in his attitude towards the Korean War where he pleaded for a policy of complete neutrality "without any reservation" whatsoever<sup>24</sup>.

Roy did not consider the neutral foreign policy of India as followed by Mr Nehru as genuine. He believed that the policy of the economic development of India with American help would logically drive her to the U.S. camp<sup>25</sup>. Moreover, the menace of Communism, both internal and external, would compel the Indian government to side with the American camp. The measures of the Indian government to suppress the communist revolt started in 1948 were interpreted by him as evidences of the anti-communist alignment of India<sup>26</sup>. Anti-communism

21. Letter dated August 4, 1950.

22. M. N. Roy, "Our Future", *Independent India*, XII (December 5, 1948), p. 584.

23. M. N. Roy, "Will the Korean War Spread ?", *The Radical Humanist*, XIV (August 27, 1950), p. 401.

24. M. N. Roy, "Freedom, Justice and War", *The Radical Humanist*, XIV (July 16, 1950), p. 330 (editorial article).

25. *Independent India*, XII (February 1, 1948), p. 54 (Resolution of the Radical Democratic Party).

26. M. N. Roy, "Nehru's Foreign Policy", *Independent India*, XII, (April 4, 1948), p. 163.

at home would make India anti-communist in world politics also. Roy clearly apprehended a great danger to Indian security from Communist China and feared that it would drive India to the American bloc. He wrote : "The tentacles of Communism triumphant in China are spreading out to threaten India through Tibet, Nepal, Eastern Turkestan and Kashmir. As a matter of fact, international communism has practically encircled India on the land. The governments of Russia and Red China stand behind this menace to India. How could the government of India, even with a superman at the helm, remain neutral, particularly, when it has taken side in the international civil war waged inside the country ? It has taken up a position where it must be dependent upon America"<sup>27</sup>. The support of India to the U.N. intervention in Korea was, in his opinion, a concrete evidence of India's alignment with the U.S. bloc. He said that the decision of India was undoubtedly influenced by the desire to retain American sympathy<sup>28</sup>.

Roy wanted India to follow a 'genuine' neutral foreign policy and this would require a corresponding domestic policy. A change in the policy of economic development and in the attitude towards the problem of Communism was, in his opinion, an essential condition of a really neutral foreign policy. "A really neutral and independent foreign policy," he wrote, "presupposes a national economy which does not rely on foreign financial aid"<sup>29</sup>. The problem of communism, both internal and external should be handled democratically without any recourse to arms or repressive measures. He wrote: "If the Nehru Government is really desirous to be neutral in the cold war let them respect the right of the Communists (of India) to hold their opinion and express it freely ... That will not be walking into the camp of communism but practising true democracy. A government, claiming to have the confidence of the people and with the control of all the organs of publicity at its disposal, should be able to expose the absurdity of communist propaganda. That is the only effective method of emasculating Com-

27. M. N. Roy, "This Neutrality", *The Radical Humanist*, XIII (December 18, 1949), p. 612.

28. M. N. Roy, "India and the Third Force", *The Radical Humanist*, XIV (August 6, 1950), p. 363.

29. M. N. Roy, "Post-Election Perspective : Threat of Dictatorship —How to Avert it", *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, February 12, 1952.

munism"<sup>30</sup>. He recommended the same democratic non-military policy towards the danger of communism from outside. He observed : "It is a conscious and contented people that can alone hold back the Red tide. They are the only sure defence against any external aggression or internal disruption"<sup>31</sup>. Roy thus tried to solve the problem of communism by promoting democracy without depending upon the army or on American assistance.

Roy was convinced that Communism was the greatest menace to the human civilization in the post-war period and he was searching for the appropriate means to fight it. The problem of Democracy versus Communism, in his opinion, cannot be solved in the battle field, because "joined on the battle, the issue will be settled not on merit, but by the superiority of the brute force"<sup>32</sup>. He was uncompromisingly opposed to war and maintained that "peace at any price is the sanest policy for all but the lunatic"<sup>33</sup>. According to his analysis war preparations were incompatible with democracy and therefore, he argued, a war, whatever may be its justification, cannot defend democracy. He wrote : "If there is no other way to defend democracy then it is a lost cause. Why plunge the world into a holocaust of death and destruction for no purpose ?"<sup>34</sup>. As a matter of fact, Roy preferred Communism to war and wrote : "Let us live to fight for freedom, even under communism, if that cannot be avoided"<sup>35</sup>.

If Roy considered the military way of fighting Communism as dangerous he regarded the economic way as inadequate. Communism also stands for economic development and therefore if the choice was to be determined by the economic factor, there was no reason why communism should be combatted.<sup>6</sup> He did

30. M. N. Roy, "This Neutrality", *The Radical Humanist*, XIII (December 18, 1949), p. 612.

31. M. N. Roy, "Cant and Hypocrisy", *The Radical Humanist*, XIII (July 17, 1949), p. 332 (editorial article).

32. M. N. Roy, "Freedom, Justice and War", *The Radical Humanist*, XIV (July 16, 1950), p. 327 (editorial article).

33. M. N. Roy, "The Price of Peace", *The Radical Humanist*, XIV (July 30, 1950), p. 363.

34. M. N. Roy, "Democracy and Total Mobilisation", *The Radical Humanist*, XIV (October 8, 1950), p. 474.

35. M. N. Roy, "Peace Offer or Provocation ?", *The Radical Humanist*, XIV (September 17, 1950), p. 444.

36. M. N. Roy, "The Colombo Conference" (Notes of the week), *The Radical Humanist*, XIV (January 15, 1950). p. 13.

not deny the necessity of improving the economic condition of the people in order to undermine the influence of communism but that alone was not enough. Communism was a danger not because it did not stand for economic development—it was a danger “only to those who cherish freedom and dignity of the individual and dislike all forms of regimentation and of coercion, physical and mental”<sup>37</sup>. Democracy, therefore, was the only bulwark against communism. Roy did not believe that the existing parliamentary and capitalist democracy can be an effective alternative to communism. He was convinced that they had exhausted their progressive potentialities. A third alternative—better than communism and the existing parliamentary capitalist democracy—was, in his opinion, essential for the further progress of human civilization. He wrote : “The world is on the verge of a catastrophe which cannot be avoided if both the conflicting ideologies and systems are not discarded for a new one . . . The required treatment is a new political theory, a new economic doctrine formulated on the basis of a new philosophy of life”<sup>38</sup>. Roy tried to supply the alternative to communism in the form of Radical Democracy, Co-operative Economy and the philosophy of New Humanism. The practice of New Humanism, he believed, would draw the people away from both the existing blocs. He wanted peace—peace at any price— in order to gain time to bring it into practice.

Real peace in the world, Roy believed, would only be established if a large number of individuals in every country can develop the spirit of cosmopolitan humanism discarding the sentiment of nationalism. The establishment of a World Government could alone solve the problem of war but the World Government, he believed, presupposes the disappearance of the nation-states. He found an irreconcilable contradiction between the existence of nation-states and the ideal of international cooperation. “The League of Nations”, he wrote, “failed because of this contradiction which has disunited the United Nations. A world composed of national states can never have peace; in apparently peaceful times, they carry on war through diplomacy”<sup>39</sup>. He was confident that the national states would never agree to give up their

37. *Ibid.*

38. M. N. Roy, “Our Future”, *Independent India*, XII, (November 28, 1948), p. 574.

39. M. N. Roy, “Dis-United Nations”, *The Radical Humanist*, XIII (May 1, 1949), pp. 203-204.



sovereignty and observed : "No effort, however bombastic and expensive, on the governmental level can take the world out of the present impasse. The hope lies in human endeavour; the cultural sanction of national states must be progressively withheld by a growing number of individual men and women in each country outgrowing the tribal mentality and cultivating the spirit of Cosmopolitan Humanism. That is the only hope".<sup>40</sup>

Roy's humanist approach towards the problems of post-war international politics explained above shows his anxiety to introduce moral values in the field of international relations. He was determined to adopt moral means under all circumstances, whatever might be the attitude and policy of the opponents.<sup>41</sup> It is an admirable ideal but the acid test by which the worth of a theory of international politics is to be judged is not an abstract principle but empirical and pragmatic considerations. A theory unrelated to reality is of doubtful value in any branch of social science. Morality may have a place and surely it should have a dominating place in international politics but a theory to be realistic must not deny other factors which are actually playing a significant role in international politics. "A discussion of international morality", Hans. J. Morgenthau rightly points out, "must guard against the two extremes of either overrating the influence of ethics upon international politics or under-estimating it by denying that statesmen and diplomats are moved by anything but considerations of material power".<sup>42</sup> The game of international politics is to-day played by the 'Nation-States', the policy of each state is determined very largely by the concept of 'national interest', and the means adopted to realise its objective is very often 'power'. Roy ignored all these three basic factors, Nation-states, National Interest and Power. Therefore his ana-

40. *Ibid.*, p. 204.

41. It appears that Roy's opinion was gradually changing on this point. While commenting upon the Rangoon Conference of the Asian Socialists in 1953, Roy, a few months before his death, wrote : "In Asia there is very little colonialism left. To demand its immediate withdrawal from Malaya and Indo-China, the two countries where some vestige of colonial rule still remains, would be to advocate delivery of those countries to communism. . . . Not only will those two particular countries be captured by the communists, but the establishment of communism there would open the neighbouring countries to the danger of Communist aggression". M. N. Roy, "Socialism in Asia has no Future", *Amrita Bazar Patrika* (August 2, 1953), Sunday Magazine Section, p. 11.

42. Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, p. 233.

lysis of international politics of the post-war period appears to be unrealistic and his solution of the problem of war utopian. He completely overlooked the impact of the military and diplomatic preparations of the U.S.A. upon the policy of Soviet Russia. In South East Asia the withdrawal of colonial rule created a power vacuum which, along with other factors, provided Communist China with an opportunity to follow a policy of aggression. The policy of the U.S.A. was to fill up that vacuum. Her alliance with various corrupt regimes in Asia undoubtedly deprived the U.S. bloc of much of its democratic character but in international relations a country can hardly follow a morally unimpeachable foreign policy. In the absence of better regimes, the U.S.A. had no other alternative than to form alliances with them. Strategic considerations cannot be overlooked by a government while formulating its foreign policy. A government must work with the materials available at present and it must remain confined to the highly restricted arena of possible alternatives. War is obviously an evil but refusal to meet aggression with force is not the solution of the problem of war. We must recognise, as John Foster Dulles has argued, that "war is not prevented merely by hating war and loving peace. Since the beginning, the peoples of the world have hated war and longed for peace. But that has not gained them peace. Even a sincere effort like the Pact of Paris showed the futility of attempting to abolish war without creating adequate and effective compensating institutions to replace it".<sup>43</sup> When aggression is imminent, a long term programme of cultural and economic development is not adequate. It must be supplemented by military preparations. Military expenditure may hamper economic progress and the emergency forced by war may be unfavourable for the practice of democracy, but politics is after all the "art of the possible", as Bismarck put it. The foreign policy of a country should include elements both of 'power politics' and morality and it must not be judged by a simple ethical yardstick.<sup>44</sup>

Roy rightly pointed out that international peace and the establishment of the World Government depend very largely upon individuals, and favourable psychological conditions must at first be created in order to realise this ideal. But individuals

43. John Foster Dulles, *War or Peace*, pp. IX-X (Preface).

44. See Ernest Lefever, *Ethics and United States Foreign Policy*, Chapter I (Ethics and International Politics).

can make fruitful contribution towards the realisation of this ideal only by trying to mould their nation's policies and not by denying the Nation States. An opinion in favour of world co-operation must be created but institutions cannot be ignored. The World Government will not mean the negation of the Nation-States but a limitation upon their sovereign right. A Federation does not annihilate the component states. Whatever may be the failures of the League of Nations and the U.N., they must be regarded as significant milestones in the journey of man towards the ideal of One World. The impatience of the idealist can only highlight the crisis but cannot cure it.

## CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

Having surveyed the different aspects of the philosophy of Radical Humanism formulated by M. N. Roy, let us conclude by a general estimate of his contributions to the political thought of modern India.

In spite of his remarkable intellectual power, strong personality and almost legendary political career Roy could not capture the imagination of the Indian people. He remained more or less an isolated and obscure figure working in the periphery of Indian politics. The reasons for this are not far to seek. First, by nature proud and unaccommodating, he could not work with others in a spirit of compromise. Jadu Gopal Mukherjee records that in his early days he tended to antagonise people very often by his peculiar manner.<sup>1</sup> J. T. Murphy, a British Communist, who met Roy at the Second Comintern Congress, describes him as "the most arrogant".<sup>2</sup> Referring to this comment Roy wrote in his Memoirs : "It is true that I have always been rather stiff, if not arrogant. In the earlier days of my contact with modern ideas and modern culture, it was the expression of an inferiority complex. But in course of time, experience taught tolerance and modesty".<sup>3</sup> Philip Spratt also writes that Roy remained "ineffective because he somehow failed to project his very attractive personality beyond a narrow circle of friends".<sup>4</sup> Secondly, though by birth a Brahmin, Roy became thoroughly Westernised in culture. His style of living and manners made him quite alien to the people of India. Though he tried, as he himself said, to become as "Indian",<sup>5</sup> he remained a foreigner to the masses of the Indian people. Thirdly, he lacked some of the essential qualities of a political leader. He thoroughly ignored the psychology of the Indian people. By going against the nationalism and national sentiment of the people, Roy antagonised them psychologically. And intellectual argumentation cannot overcome a psychological chasm. Fourthly, in the second period of his Marxist career Roy was in a state of confusion

1. Jadu Gopal Mukhopadhyaya, *op. cit.*, p. 619.

2. J. T. Murphy, *New Horizons*, p. 240.

3. *Roy Memoirs*, (May 3, 1953), p. 210.

4. Philip Spratt, *Blowing up India*, p. 76.

5. M. N. Roy, *Letters from Jail*, p. 1.

and self-contradiction. By that time he had, as we have explained earlier, ceased to be a Marxist though he tried to integrate his new ideas with the philosophy of Marxism. Haunted by the ghost of Marx on the one side and convinced of the validity of his own ideas on the other, Roy was not able either to develop a Communist movement in the country or to participate fruitfully in the struggle for national independence.

Roy was a tragic figure in Indian politics. Endowed with iron determination and inflexible fortitude, fired by the highest idealism and armed with almost encyclopaedic knowledge, he failed to leave a deep impress upon the political life of India. His intellectual qualities and tenacity of purpose are admitted by all. While in Moscow Jawaharlal Nehru was impressed by his intellectual brilliance.<sup>6</sup> Theodore Helfferich of Germany whom Roy met at Batavia speaks highly of "his patriotism, his courage, his firmness and his reliability".<sup>7</sup> Gomez, a friend of Roy in Mexico, considered him, as we have mentioned earlier, "deadly serious".<sup>8</sup> With all these qualities Roy was not politically successful, because, fundamentally a thinker and a philosopher, he was a misfit in the field of political practice. In his prison diary he wrote : "Lie hunting is my profession. This is a thankless job" but "I shall keep on hunting lies. It is too late to seek popularity, and fortunately, I do not possess sufficient intellectual mediocrity to qualify for the dubious distinction".<sup>9</sup> A man with such a spirit can hardly become a mass leader. Firmly convinced of the truth of his ideas, he was not prepared to dilute them, and thus he failed to open up any channel of communication between himself and the masses. He would have been more fruitful if after his departure from orthodox Marxism, he could keep himself confined to the intellectual or, as he called it, the Renaissance movement. It is difficult to agree with E. P. W. da Costa's judgement that "it would have been happier if M. N. Roy were more involved in practical, than in philosophical, politics".<sup>10</sup>

6. Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*, p. 154.

7. "The Memoirs on the Indo-German collaboration during the First World War", by Dr Theodore Helfferich. In reply to a letter by A. C. Bose, Dr Helfferich wrote this Memoir and it is preserved in the National Archives, New Delhi.

8. See *Survey—a journal of Soviet and East European Studies*, October, 1954, p. 34.

9. *IW*, pp. 96, 100.

10. See Preface to M. N. Roy's book *Radical Humanism*.

Roy's main purpose in the last phase of his life was to develop the philosophy of Radical Humanism as an alternative to Marxism. Following Marxism, he tried to make it comprehensive with metaphysics, historiography, ethics, political and economic doctrines all harmoniously blended and logically integrated in a monistic philosophy. The wisdom of building up a philosophical system of this sort is now being challenged mainly from two sources—logical positivism and pragmatism. Logical positivism is an empiricist school of thought which conceives of philosophy as logical analysis or, in other words, as a clarification of language we use in our daily life. Pragmatism is concerned with the practice of knowledge in the matter-of-fact world of living and prefers a piecemeal to a total approach towards the social problems. The former makes philosophy unintelligible for all except the few experts and the latter abhors philosophical generalisation. A piecemeal approach to social change has its merits but without an implied perspective of total transformation, such an approach may lead to changes in contradictory directions and may ultimately give rise to social maladjustment. The need for a comprehensive philosophy of total human existence is perhaps not yet over.

A firm believer in the supreme role of ideas in the making of history, Roy tried to face the challenge of Marxism first in the field of ideology. By his writings and personal contacts he was able to make a section of the Indian intelligentsia keenly conscious of the dangers of communism and to create a mental climate favourable for individual freedom and initiative. But in the field of practice his idea of partyless politics remained almost barren. Success in the philosophical front, he believed, would pave the ground for fruitful social activities in terms of the political and economic doctrines he formulated. But here arises a problem of fundamental importance. It is possible to launch a broad democratic movement under the banner of a comprehensive philosophical system? A political party functioning under the democratic constitution may have a rigid philosophical basis but a movement started with the idea of creating democratic consciousness among the people in general must remain more flexible. Democracy presupposes diversities of views within the broad frame-work of a set of social values and attitudes. General education in a democracy cannot be imparted to the people by a movement committed to a particular rigid and comprehensive philosophy.

Though Roy tried to formulate a new social philosophy, distinct from Liberalism and Marxism, and wanted to go, as he himself said, beyond Marxism instead of reverting to liberalism, to all intents and purposes he revived the tradition of liberal humanism of the pre-Marxian era. The denunciation of all brands of collectivism and state authoritarianism in favour of the freedom of the individual made Roy essentially a liberal thinker. The values of Radical Humanism are all liberal values. The practice of liberalism disappointed Roy, and, therefore, he tried to replace it by a new pattern of institutions which he believed was more in conformity with its professed ideals. He thus tried to save the spirit of liberalism against the onslaught of totalitarianism. Radical Humanism, in the last analysis, is liberalism applied to the age of socialism. Liberalism is a dynamic concept and it is not necessarily and organically related to a particular type of political and economic institution. But Roy was reluctant to accept the position to which he was forced by the logical development of his own ideas. His Marxist past prevented him from accepting liberalism with a clean conscience. This inner conflict of his mind is clearly revealed in his letter to Ruth Fischer, dated October 23, 1949. He wrote : "We cannot entirely turn our back on the ideals which took us through so many adventures during a quarter of a century. We cannot disown a spiritual kinship with the communists, notwithstanding all their stupidities and misdeeds. On the other hand, having spent a whole life-time in quest of economic equality, real political freedom and social justice, one cannot but be suffocated in the atmosphere of big-bellied bravados and square-jawed vulgarity. Was Marx a fool or a malicious liar when he exposed the hypocrisy of the bourgeois society and the unreality of freedom under parliamentary democracy? Would it be reasonable to cast doubt on the socialist theories and discard the ideal of the social emancipation of the exploited masses (they are exploited, even when they earn 5 dollars an hour) because Stalin has betrayed them"?<sup>11</sup>

For an impartial evaluation of the philosophy of Radical Humanism it is necessary to differentiate the basic values of the philosophy from its specific doctrines. The abiding contributions

11. The letter is preserved in the M. N. Roy Archives, Dehradun. It is true that gradually Roy deviated from this position but still he always tried to reach a new ideal beyond Communism instead of going back to an older one.

of Roy in the realm of political thought must be sought in the liberal values of Radical Humanism. They are :—

- (a) The supreme importance of the individual in society;
- (b) The reconciliation of morality with secularity;
- (c) Rational and free thinking of individuals;
- (d) Democracy from below or, what is now called, grass root democracy.

These values are old but the emphasis put on them by the pioneer of the Communist Movement in India gave them an added significance.

In this age of socialism and statism, planning and technology, Roy's stress on the sanctity and dignity of the individual has a great stimulating significance. He understood that individual freedom and democracy depend not primarily upon constitutional safeguards, institutional changes or economic systems but upon the quality of the individual. This explains his emphasis on education. In the present era of power politics, mass movements and pressure groups, Roy's concept of rational politics practised by individuals on their own initiative is a noble attempt to bring the individuals to the centre of society.

The importance of the concept of ethical politics in the present age cannot in fact be overestimated. Under the influence of natural science, politics has become not only secular but has also developed a tendency to become value-free and objective, renouncing all relations with ethical norms and ideals. By developing the concept of secular ethics, Roy tried to combine scientific objectivity with ethical idealism in political practice. The importance of secular ethics in an age of secular public life is undeniable and therefore Roy's attempt to reconcile moral values with the secular outlook should be appreciated by all who stand for modernism without sacrificing the positive values of the past. How to reconcile moral education with the principle of secularism is an important problem of the modern age and India is faced with it directly. The problem of corruption is the most vital problem of Indian public life of to-day and Roy tried to trace it to the politics for power. If his answer is not wholly acceptable it is undoubtedly worth considering

Roy's most outstanding contribution lay in developing in India an intellectual movement on the basis of free, rational and scientific thinking. His evaluation of the past culture of India was unorthodox, illuminating and thought-provoking and therein lay its significance. An uncompromising atheist, Roy brought



about a revolution in the traditional pattern of thinking of a small but significant section of the Indian people. It can reasonably be expected that Roy the iconoclastic thinker would survive Roy the politician.

The centralisation of power, either political or economic, was considered by him as inimical to individual freedom. That was the reason why he was opposed to socialism as well as to the present practice of parliamentary democracy. He tried to vest economic and political power in the people. That was the spirit behind his concept of Radical Democracy and the Co-operative Economy. He believes that to be real and effective, democracy should be practised not simply in the state legislatures or in the national parliament but also in every village and town. The present experiment of Panchayati Raj and the Co-operative Movement in India may profitably draw upon the ideas of M. N. Roy.

In spite of his isolation and comparative obscurity, Roy's ideas did not remain barren. Jayaprakash Narayan, the prominent Bhoodan leader and the great advocate of partyless democracy, has been largely influenced by him. Roy's influence on Jayaprakash can be traced as much to the period when he accepted Marxism as when he gave up Marxism in favour of the Sarvodaya philosophy. Referring to his conversion to Marxism in the United States of America Jayaprakash writes : "The pungent writings of M. N. Roy that found their way from Europe into the communist cells, particularly of Asian students, completed the conversion to Marxism".<sup>12</sup> Again, while explaining his new philosophy, Jayaprakash refers to "the significant and seminal contribution of the late Mr M. N. Roy to the body of thought with which I am dealing".<sup>13</sup> The Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom is dominated mainly by the followers of M. N. Roy. The philosophy of Radical Humanism directly or indirectly has influenced and is likely to influence more the movement of Democratic Socialism in India. His humanist philosophy was also given an international recognition. In August 1952 several humanist organisations from different parts of the world formed the International Humanist and Ethical Union (I.H.E.U.) with its headquarters at Amsterdam. Roy was elected as one of the Vice-Presidents of the Humanist International and he was invited to participate in its first Congress.

12. Jayaprakash Narayan, *From Socialism to Sarvodaya*, p. 10.

13. Jayaprakash Narayan, *Swaraj for the People*, Introduction.

He was also invited by a number of universities and academic associations in Europe and the United States. While he was thus on the threshold of a new chapter of his life he died of cerebral thrombosis on 25 January 1954. Thus ended the chequered career of Roy, "a figure in three revolutions : Russian, Chinese and Indian".<sup>14</sup>

Roy began his political carrer as a revolutionary and ended as a liberal humanist. He tried to bring heaven on earth but realised that the revolutionary's quest for the New Jerusalem lying on the other side of 'the struggle' was an impossible dream. The lure of the utopia to be conquered in future gave way to the reality of the present to be improved by human cooperation. As a humanist he understood that if heaven cannot be achieved, the earth at least can be repaired. He died a disillusioned but possibly not a wholly disappointed man.

14. John Gunther, *Inside Asia*, p. 462.

## APPENDIX

### PRINCIPLES OF RADICAL DEMOCRACY

#### ONE

Man is the archetype of society, co-operative social relationships contribute to develop individual potentialities. But the development of the individual is the measure of social progress. Collectivity presupposes the existence of individuals. Except as the sum total of freedom and well-being, actually enjoyed by individuals, social liberation and progress are imaginary ideals, which are never attained. Well-being, if it is actual, is enjoyed by individuals. It is wrong to ascribe a collective ego to any form of human community (*viz.*, nation class, etc.), as that practice means sacrifice of the individual. Collective well-being is a function of the well-being of individuals.

#### TWO

Quest for freedom and search for truth constitute the basic urge of human progress. The quest for freedom is the continuation, on a higher level—of intelligence and emotion—of the biological struggle for existence. The search for truth is a corollary thereof. Increasing knowledge of nature enables man to be progressively free from the tyranny of natural phenomena, and physical and social environments. Truth is the content of knowledge.

#### THREE

The purpose of all rational human endeavour, individual as well as collective, is attainment of freedom, in ever increasing measure. Freedom is progressive disappearance of all restrictions on the unfolding of the potentialities of individuals, as human beings, and not as cogs in the wheels of a mechanised social organism. The position of the individual, therefore, is the measure of the progressive and liberating significance of any collective effort or social organisation. The success of any collective endeavour is to be measured by the actual benefit for its constituent units.

## FOUR

Rising out of the background of the law-governed physical nature, the human being is essentially rational. Reason being a biological property, it is not the antithesis of will. Intelligence and emotion can be reduced to a common biological denominator. Historical determinism, therefore, does not exclude freedom of the will. As a matter of fact, human will is the most powerful determining factor. Otherwise, there would be no room for revolutions in a rationally determined process of history. The rational and scientific concept of determinism is not to be confused with the teleological or religious doctrine of predestination.

## FIVE

The economic interpretation of history is deduced from a wrong interpretation of Materialism. It implies dualism, whereas Materialism is a monistic philosophy. History is a determined process; but there are more than one causative factors. Human will is one of them, and it cannot always be referred directly to any economic incentive.

## SIX

Ideation is a physiological process resulting from the awareness of environments. But once they are formed, ideas exist by themselves, governed by their own laws. The dynamics of ideas runs parallel to the process of social evolution, the two influencing each other mutually. But in no particular point of the process of the integral human evolution, can a direct causal relation be established between historical events and the movements of ideas. ('Idea' is here used in the common philosophical sense of ideology or system of ideas). Cultural patterns and ethical values are not mere ideological super-structures of established economic relations. They are also historically determined—by the logic of the history of ideas.

## SEVEN

For creating a new world of freedom, revolution must go beyond an economic reorganisation of society. Freedom does not necessarily follow from the capture of political power in the name of oppressed and exploited classes and abolition of private property in the means of production.

## EIGHT

Communism or Socialism may conceivably be the means for the attainment of the goal of freedom. How far it can serve that purpose, must be judged by experience. A political system and an economic experiment which subordinate the man of flesh and blood to an imaginary collective ego, be it the nation or a class, cannot possibly be the suitable means for the attainment of the goal of freedom. On the one hand, it is absurd to argue that negation of freedom will lead to freedom. and, on the other hand, it is not freedom to sacrifice the individual at the altar of an imaginary collective ego. Any social philosophy or scheme of social reconstruction which does not recognise the sovereignty of the individual, and dismisses the ideal of freedom as an empty abstraction, can have no more than a very limited progressive and revolutionary significance.

## NINE

The State being the political organisation of society, its withering away under Communism is a utopia which has been exploded by experience. Planned economy on the basis of socialised industries presupposes a powerful political machinery. Democratic control of that machinery alone can guarantee freedom under the new order. Planning of production for use is possible on the basis of political democracy and individual freedom.

## TEN

State ownership and planned economy do not by themselves end exploitation of labour; nor do they necessarily lead to an equal distribution of wealth. Economic democracy is no more possible in the absence of political democracy than the latter is in the absence of the former.

## ELEVEN

Dictatorship tends to perpetuate itself. Planned economy under political dictatorship disregards individual freedom on the pleas of efficiency, collective effort and social progress. Consequently, a higher form of democracy in the socialist society, as it is conceived at present, becomes an impossibility. Dictatorship defeats its professed end.

## TWELVE

The defects of formal parliamentary democracy have also been exposed in experience. They result from the delegation of

power. To make democracy effective, power must always remain vested in the people, and there must be ways and means for the people to wield the sovereign power effectively, not periodically, but from day to day. Atomised individual citizens are powerless for all practical purposes, and most of the time. They have no means to exercise their sovereignty and to wield a standing control of the State machinery.

#### THIRTEEN

Liberalism is falsified or parodied under formal parliamentary democracy. The doctrine of laissez-faire only provides the legal sanction to the exploitation of man by man. The concept of economic man negates the liberating doctrine of individualism. The economic man is bound to be a slave or a slaveholder. This vulgar concept must be replaced by the reality of an instinctively rational being who is moral because he is rational. Morality is an appeal to conscience, and conscience is the instinctive awareness of, and reaction to, environments. It is a mechanistic biological function on the level of consciousness. Therefore, it is rational.

#### FOURTEEN

The alternative to parliamentary democracy is not dictatorship; it is organised democracy in the place of the formal democracy of powerless atomised individual citizens. The parliament should be the apex of a pyramidal structure of the State reared on the base of an organised democracy composed of a country-wide network of People's Committees. The political organisation of society (the State) will be coincident with the entire society, and consequently the State will be under a standing democratic control.

#### FIFTEEN

The function of a revolutionary and liberating social philosophy is to lay emphasis on the basic fact of history that man is the maker of his world—man as a thinking being, and he can be so only as an individual. The brain is a means of production, and produces the most revolutionary commodity. Revolutions presuppose iconoclastic ideas. An increasingly large number of men conscious of their creative power, motivated by the indomitable will to remake the world, moved by the adventure of ideas, and fired with the ideal of a free society of free

men, can create the conditions under which democracy will be possible.

#### SIXTEEN

The method and programme of social revolution must be based on a reassertion of the basic principle of social progress. A social renaissance can come only through determined and widespread endeavour to educate the people as regards the principles of freedom and rational co-operative living. The people will be organised into effective democratic bodies to build up the socio-political foundation of the post revolutionary order. Social revolution requires in rapidly increasing number men of the new renaissance, and a rapidly expanding system of People's Committees; and an organic co-ordination of both. The programme of revolution will similarly be based on the principles of freedom, reason and social harmony. It will mean elimination of every form of monopoly and vested interest in the regulation of social life.

#### SEVENTEEN

Radical democracy presupposes economic reorganisation of society so as to eliminate the possibility of exploitation of man by man. Progressive satisfaction of material necessities is the precondition for the individual members of society unfolding their intellectual and other finer human potentialities. An economic reorganisation such as will guarantee a progressively rising standard of living, is the foundation of the Radical Democratic State. Economic liberation of the masses is an essential condition for their advancing towards the goal of freedom.

#### EIGHTEEN

The economy of the new social order will be based on production for use and distribution with reference to human needs. Its political organisation excludes delegation of power which, in practice, deprives the people of effective power; it will be based on the direct participation of the entire adult population through the People's Committees. Its culture will be based on universal dissemination of knowledge and on minimum control and maximum scope for, and incentive to, scientific and creative activities. The new society, being founded on reason and science, will necessarily be planned. But it will be planning with the freedom of the individual as its main purpose. The

new society will be democratic—politically, economically as well as culturally. Consequently, it will be a democracy which can defend itself.

#### NINETEEN

The ideal of Radical Democracy will be attained through the collective efforts of spiritually free men united in the determination of creating a world of freedom. They will function as the guides, friends and philosophers of the people rather than as their would be rulers. Consistently with the goal of freedom, their political practice will be rational and therefore ethical. Their efforts will be reinforced by the growth of the people's will to freedom. Ultimately, the Radical Democratic State will rise with the support of enlightened public opinion as well as intelligent action of the people. Realising that freedom is inconsistent with concentration of power, Radical Democrats will aim at the widest diffusion of power.

#### TWENTY

In the last analysis, education of the citizen is the condition for such a reorganisation of society as will be conducive to common progress and prosperity without encroaching upon the freedom of the individual. The People's Committees will be the schools for the political and civic education of the citizen. The structure and function of the Radical Democratic State will enable detached individuals to come to the forefront of public affairs. Manned with such individuals, the State machinery will cease to be the instrument in the hands of any particular class to coerce others. Only spiritually free individuals in power can smash all chains of slavery and usher in freedom for all.

#### TWENTY-ONE

Radicalism integrates science into social organisation and reconciles individuality with collective life; it gives to freedom a moral-intellectual as well as a social content; it offers a comprehensive theory of social progress in which both the dialectics of economic determinism and dynamics of ideas find their due recognition and it deduces from the same a method and a programme of social revolution in our time.

#### TWENTY-TWO

Radicalism starts from the dictum that "man is the measure of everything" (Protagoras) or "man is the root of mankind"



(Marx), and advocates reconstruction of the world as a commonwealth and fraternity of free men, by the collective endeavour of spiritually emancipated moral men.

#### NOTE TO APPENDIX

In the original version of the "Principles of Radical Democracy" as published in the first edition, Theses 19 and 20 ran as follows :

The ideal of Radical Democracy will be attained through the collective efforts of spiritually free men united in a political party with the determination of creating a world of freedom. The members of the party will function as the guides, friends and philosophers of the people rather than as their would-be rulers. Consistently with the goal of freedom, the political practice of the party will be rational and therefore ethical. The party will grow with the growth of the people's will to freedom, and come to power with the support of enlightened public opinion as well as intelligent action of the people. Realising that freedom is inconsistent with concentration of power, its aim will be the widest diffusion of power. Its success in attaining political power will only be a stage in that process, and by the logic of its own existence, the party will utilise political power for its further diffusion until the State becomes coterminus with the entire society.

In the last analysis, education of the citizen is the condition for such a reorganisation of society as will be conducive to common progress and prosperity without encroaching upon the freedom of individual. The Radical Democratic State will be the school for the political and civic education of the citizen. Its structure and function will enable detached individuals to come to the forefront of public affairs. Manned with such individuals, the State machinery will cease to be the instrument in the hands of any particular class to coerce others. Only spiritually free individuals in power can smash all chains of slavery and usher in freedom for all.

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It has not yet been possible to prepare a comprehensive list of the writings of M. N. Roy. He wrote extensively in different languages and they were published in different countries. His contributions to various periodicals in different parts of the world have not yet been fully traced and a good part of his work, written in jail, still remains unpublished and is preserved in the M. N. Roy Archives, Indian Renaissance Institute, Dehradun. Sometime before his death Roy and his wife prepared a list of his writings published in the form of books and pamphlets. In 1955 under the Modern India Project at the University of California, Mr Patrick Wilson brought out a preliminary check list of the writings of Roy. These efforts have made it easier to prepare a tentative list of the published writings of Roy and most of the books and pamphlets mentioned below are now available in the M. N. Roy Archives. In this dissertation only those books which were considered relevant for tracing the evolution of his political philosophy have been referred to, and books dealing with the detailed analysis of contemporary problems have been left out, as far as possible, or have just been mentioned.

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(e) Report of the Sedition Committee, presided over by Mr Justice Rowlatt (1918).

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